

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the University High School's Science Bowl team.

Recently, University High School competed in the National Science Bowl's regional competition, hosted annually at the NASA Jet Propulsion Lab. Over 100 students from southern California took part in this intense, "Jeopardy!"-style tournament. It is a marathon, not a sprint, but these students were ready to run it.

The team spent months mastering the curriculum, which included everything from natural sciences to advanced mathematics, and their hard work paid off. Against 19 of the brightest teams, University High School prevailed.

This is now the school's fifth victory at the regional Science Bowl in the past 6 years. I am honored to celebrate these students' achievement and cheer them on as they head to nationals.

Keep making Orange County proud.

CONTINUING FIGHT FOR ERA

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, for as long as I have been here in the United States Congress, which is more than two decades, we have been fighting to add to the Constitution a perfectly sensible amendment, one that does not offend the American people.

It simply says that the equal rights amendment declares that women are equal in this Nation from the early suffragette days to the days of Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Susan B. Anthony. That is only a fair statement, that the rights of women should be considered part of the Constitution.

Unfortunately, today, the United States Senate voted it down when 51 of our Senators, including Senator ELIZABETH WARREN, whom I met outside the Senate Chambers, wanted to make sure that the Constitution stood on its four points of equality, justice, opportunity, and democracy.

We will continue to fight until the equal rights amendment is passed fairly in this Nation and for the world to see, as they have admired us for our principles of freedom, that we believe in freedom for all the people of this Nation, men and women and families. That is extremely important. It is sad that it was voted down today by our friends on the other side of the aisle.

END THE REGRESSIVE AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CISCOMANI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from California (Mr. MIKE GARCIA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that

all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because all levels of government need to do a better job of getting taxpayer dollars to the classrooms and teachers instead of bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., and the capitals of our respective States.

From Washington, D.C., to Sacramento to county governments, far too much educational money is squandered on administrators and central planning bureaucracies.

I see a path, Mr. Speaker, to paying our teachers up to 12 percent more without spending an additional dollar from current Federal or State budgets.

This week, I am introducing a bill that I hope eases the pain for teachers and students in the classroom. My Cash to Classrooms Act will ensure States are not allowed to use a backward, regressive formula for school funding called average daily allowance, or ADA.

In California, statewide data for the 2021-2022 school year shows an ADA-to-enrollment ratio of 91.4 percent. That means that 8.6 percent of what should be the average school's budget is withheld because of absentee rates at the State level.

That is an 8.6 percent reduction to their full funding because of a metric that, frankly, the schools and teachers can't control. The teachers and principals largely can't control who comes to school on a given day.

In many cases, the students and parents themselves can't control when they come to school. In California, there was a waiver that allowed schools to be fully funded despite absences because of COVID, but that waiver itself is now gone.

Also in California, many schools still today require students to stay home if they test positive for COVID, regardless of the symptoms. So, students aren't allowed to come to school, but the schools are forced to eat the costs.

I have heard from parents in Lancaster, California, and Palmdale, California, in my district, that they actually won't let their kids walk to school on certain days because they would have to walk there alone. The neighborhoods aren't safe enough for them to do so, and there are not enough busing options for them. So, on the days when the parents are unable to drive their kids to school, they keep them home.

Again, this is not within the control of the schools or teachers, so we can't blame the parents or the teachers or the students for any of this. That is a policy failure on the part of Sacramento.

Part of this is making sure that we keep our communities safe and give our communities busing options. How-

ever, again, schools pay the price when kids don't show up for school.

In reality, this average daily attendance policy is actually very regressive. It is particularly regressive for disadvantaged groups. It hurts the underfunded districts, the poorer neighborhoods, and the schools with higher percentages of minorities the most. These are the schools that need the funding the most, the schools that have the highest ratios of students to teachers, and the schools that have the toughest challenges with recruiting and retaining teachers in the classroom. These are especially the districts that can't afford to pay for the buses and additional costs to adequately provide for special ed children.

These poor teachers and principals are calling parents nonstop after school to try to get their kids to come back to school. They do so many times on their own dime and their own time, and some schools have even gone so far as to put extra people on the payroll for the sole purpose of ensuring accurate attendance counts, not for the student's sake but to prevent more money from being lost from the capitals. This, in turn, pulls even more resources and funding that could be used for teacher pay or class enrichment.

Schools are having attendance competitions in the classrooms now. I have seen it firsthand at my own child's school. Having attendance competitions as a teacher is like having passengers have an on-time departure competition on a commercial airline. You can root for an on-time departure as a passenger, Mr. Speaker, but, in reality, you have no say whether the flight takes off on time.

Teachers and principals can root for higher attendance rates, but the reality is that they can't really control it. Yet, they pay for it when there are absences.

Mr. Speaker, if you want better quality teachers and more of them, don't defund school budgets because of attendance. This is actually an evil practice.

Only seven States, including my State of California, unfortunately, utilize this average daily attendance, or ADA, method. There is a reason why 85 percent of the States don't do this. It is because it aggravates the problems of attendance in our public schools and because it doesn't make sense.

Let's pay our teachers more, not less. Let's get more resources into the classroom, not fewer. Let's not let bureaucratic agencies pocket the cash on underruns that are created as a result of absentees in the classroom.

In my district alone, local schools are getting only about 90 percent of their funding because of this archaic way of funding schools. We can give the teachers a 10 percent pay raise with that money if we didn't fund schools this way. This would actually attract more talent and a better quality workforce and keep that talent in the classrooms longer.

Here is another lever, Mr. Speaker. Administrators at the Department of Education here in Washington, D.C., on average make two times more than teachers in classrooms in California. The administrators here—the bureaucrats in D.C. within the Department of Education—make \$120,000, on average, every year.

Let's pay the bureaucrats less and the teachers more.

Mr. Speaker, I am committed to ensuring money is spent at the lowest levels of government. One dollar spent from the Federal Government behaves like 15 cents by the time it gets to the classroom.

Let's download the funds to the local districts, get it out of the State bureaucrats and the D.C. bureaucrats, and let's ensure the States fully fund their schools despite attendance rates.

□ 1700

CELEBRATING BISHOP HEARNS 90TH BIRTHDAY

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a community giant and historic leader of the Antelope Valley who is celebrating his 90th birthday this week, Bishop Hearn, Sr. of Lancaster, California.

Bishop Hearn came from humble beginnings, growing up as a sharecropper in Mississippi. Driven by the desire to serve, he went on to fight for our Nation overseas in Korea in the U.S. Army.

He came home and completed his education to become an engineer. He then started working at the beloved Air Force base in our district, Edwards Air Force Base, and had a groundbreaking career there.

Upon his retirement from engineering, Bishop Hearn decided to continue on his life's path of service by being the first African-American official elected in Lancaster, ultimately becoming mayor.

A multitude of accomplishments for a wonderful and heroic man, and someone I personally have great respect for in many ways, especially as a spiritual leader in our communities.

As the Antelope Valley gathers to celebrate Bishop Hearn's life, I too express my thanks and gratitude for his lifetime of continued service, leadership, and being a role model for all of us. May his patriotic and heroic life be a guiding light for all of us.

PRESIDENT BIDEN SHOULD NEGOTIATE WITH HOUSE REPUBLICANS

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, with a myriad of crises under the President's current watch, from the border to our national security and, yes, to our economy and national debt, you would think that President Biden would be eager to come to the negotiating table with the House GOP to have the debates about the debt ceiling and have the conversations about viable solutions that actually get our economy back on track and ensure that we don't default on our debt later this year.

However, as we are learning, that is not the case. It turns out he doesn't

seem to want to come for negotiations and sit down at the table with us with an outlook to get to a solution.

How did we get here, Mr. Speaker?

Let's take a trip down memory lane.

Let me remind you that macroeconomics is like physics with a dollar sign in front of it. For every action, there is a reaction. For every input, there is an output.

When you look back, for a number of years up until 2020, you will see that our Nation's annual operating budget was essentially a flat line. It was about \$1.3 trillion every year from about 2009 to 2020.

In 2021, the number became \$1.4 trillion.

In 2022, the number was \$1.5 trillion.

In 2023, this last fiscal year, the number grew to \$1.7 trillion.

This year, when the President comes to Congress with his budget request, we see that he is asking now for \$1.9 trillion.

These numbers and figures are depicted in this chart. This line, instead of being flat and linear, has gone upwards and is parabolic.

Looking at that from the 2020 budget of \$1.3 trillion versus what the President is asking for today, with \$1.9 trillion requested, that is a growth of 46 percent in just 4 years. That doesn't include the \$6 trillion of liquidity pumped into the market spaces and various Federal agencies and State agencies from the American Rescue Plan, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the bipartisan infrastructure package. There is still \$6 trillion of additional liquidity in addition to these annual operating budgets in the market space.

Mr. Speaker, this really is an existential conversation that we are having about the economy right now. The President and the far left have been walking us into a turning propeller, and we all know that is a bad thing.

In the House, the majority, just yesterday, passed a good compromise bill, a fiscally conservative bill that addresses this concerning sharp increase in Federal spending while also raising the debt ceiling, a looming situation we all must address soon before it turns into another crisis under Joe Biden's watch. The bill effectively allows us to avoid walking into the turning propeller.

It is called the Limit, Save, Grow Act, and it will actually provide \$4.8 trillion in total savings and cost avoidance.

It will claw back billions of unspent COVID dollars that are still out there.

It will repeal the additional funding for 87,000 additional IRS agents.

It will unleash American energy production to lower energy costs for American families, making us more energy independent.

It will also put a stop to the bad Federal spending habits from the last 3 years that we have seen here.

This bill looks to reset our annual operating budget to fiscal year 2022, which is not an extreme position. First

of all, FY22 was just 6 months ago, and we were operating under those constraints. As you can see, it is about the midpoint of our funding profile over the last 4 years.

This is a compromise bill. It is a great position to be in for fiscal conservatives, and it is something that the President should embrace and come to the table and have negotiations.

Oh, by the way, this bill does protect Social Security and Medicare, and it does not harm VA benefits, as some have been pushing a narrative of. This is good for our veterans, good for our economy, and good for the future of Social Security and Medicare, things that I have been very vocal about supporting over the last several years.

These false narratives about conservatives threatening Social Security and Medicare and VA benefits are outright lies. We are working to actually protect those programs, not jeopardize them.

President Biden has shown little to no interest in coming to the negotiating table to pass a fiscally responsible bill that addresses the debt ceiling. As I said at the beginning, there are many crises that need to be solved at the hand of President Biden. All roads seem to be leading to the White House when we look at our blizzard of crises that we are experiencing right now. We can add the debt ceiling that is imminently looming in front of us to this blizzard of crises.

As the House Republicans bring forth solutions, the President should work with us and implement these solutions as the President of the United States. At a minimum, he should be willing to come to the negotiating table and in good faith have these conversations, making compromises to get to a solution, just as our Founding Fathers would want him to.

CELEBRATING A NEW SPACE RENAISSANCE

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, just 120 years ago and after being around for some 300,000 years, mankind figured out how to fly in our own atmosphere.

Just 2 years ago, we figured out how to fly a helicopter in the Martian atmosphere.

Last fall, Artemis I completed its historic trip around the Moon, the farthest flight on a deep-space mission in a machine that is rated for human occupancy.

Just last week, SpaceX, under the leadership of Elon Musk, launched the largest rocket and flying vehicle ever flown on this planet.

We are truly in a new space renaissance and a new golden era for the great American journey, to the Moon and ultimately to Mars and beyond.

For the folks watching at home, if you have been reading the headlines, you know that Congress has been debating several important and, frankly, existential topics here recently.

Whether you are reading about the approaching debt limit crisis, our open borders, the evacuation of Americans

in Sudan, the increasing aggression from the Chinese Communist Party, the CCP, or theentanyl crisis ravaging our hometowns as a result of the open border policy, it is easy to get the idea that everything is all doom and gloom in the world today.

Don't get me wrong, I understand, these are very serious issues, and, of course, issues that Congress needs to be hitting head-on, and our President needs to be doing the same.

Some in our country have gotten so fixated on pointing the finger at Americans and our beautiful country and trying to say how bad we are that they have lost sight of just how exceptional we are and how we still inspire many in our country and across the globe.

I stood here in this same spot 2 years ago and said:

"As a Nation, we are thirsty for something to rally behind, something that unifies us, something that we can all be invested in, be intrigued by, be impassioned about, and something to be positive about.

"There isn't a better movement to get behind than our Nation's modern space program."

I believe in those words as strongly today as when I said them.

In addition to the accomplishments I mentioned earlier, in the past 2 years, NASA and American companies have launched Artemis I, supercharging the mission to establish a permanent human presence on the lunar surface.

We have sent the James Webb Space Telescope to the far side of the Moon to provide a generational leap in our understanding of the earliest days of the universe.

SpaceX in the last 2 years has launched 31 payloads.

NASA has recently named the next four humans to go to the Moon. These four crewmembers were named as the Artemis II crew. Three out of the four of them are F-18 pilots. One of them is a Canadian. And Miss Christina Koch, from North Carolina, who is an award-winning astronaut herself, will keep them all in line, I am sure.

Congratulations to the Artemis II crew. They have worked hard for this. They are going to represent the American pinnacle of experience in space over the next several years and represent us well, as they have in the past.

Mr. Speaker, my point here is twofold: One, despite all of the discord and fighting by elected officials, when government agencies are judiciously regulated and supported by Congress and partner with private entities that hire the best minds our country can offer, we can still achieve the impossible.

The public-private partnership with NASA and its commercial partners is working. The international partnerships between NASA and their counterparts overseas are working.

The second point is that none of this would have been possible without the 27th Congressional District of California. Ever since October 14, 1947, when Chuck Yeager freed mankind

from the constraints of the sound barrier, the Antelope Valley has been synonymous with aerospace innovation. That is why it is known more frequently as the aerospace valley instead of the Antelope Valley.

We are now not only the home to Edwards Air Force Base, but also to the Air Force's Plant 42 where the next generation of military aircraft, like the B-21 and F-35, are developed and built to ensure that we maintain air dominance over any nation that would challenge us.

We also have the NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center where the X-59 is being developed to bring quiet supersonic flight to our commercial airways, Mr. Speaker. It is an aircraft that can fly supersonically and be hardly heard from the ground by the time it is all done. It is a fantastic development program, making the entire world more accessible than it has ever been before with commercial supersonic flight.

The aerospace valley is a source of immense pride for myself and my constituents, just like how our space missions are a source of pride for the entire Nation.

I say again, as I said 2 years ago, Mr. Speaker: "Today, we have no excuses not to be inspired. We in Congress have no excuses to not support these exceptional programs in earnest and with pride. We have no choice."

TRIBUTE TO VETERANS

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my appreciation for all the brave men and women who have selflessly served the Nation in the United States Armed Forces.

America is the greatest Nation on Earth because of the many generations that have fought to preserve the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy as Americans.

As a former U.S. Navy aviator, I flew over 30 combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and I understand the service and sacrifice that our Nation's veterans and their families make.

For generations, young men and women have answered our Nation's call to serve. From the shores of Normandy to the jungles of Vietnam and the mountains of Afghanistan, our U.S. servicemembers have protected the beacon of democracy and her allies throughout the world. This is a debt that we cannot repay well enough.

Over the past year, we have lost members of the Greatest Generation in my district, including a gentleman by the name of Lou Moore and another by the name of Richard Manning. I had the honor of meeting these World War II heroes, these patriots who lived a life of service to our Nation. May God bless these American heroes.

To all of our Vietnam veterans, thank you and welcome home.

With all that said, we must ensure that we are actually taking better care of our heroes and our veterans. As a Member of Congress, my top priority

will always be constituent services, and one of the greatest honors my staff and I have is to have the ability to assist veterans with Federal agency casework, most often with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Since just last year, we have assisted over 200 veterans and stand ready to assist many more.

I especially thank two of my staffers, incredible caseworkers, a lady by the name of Chris Ward and another by the name of Frances Brown. They are the best constituent caseworkers in the Nation. Chris and Frances have processed hundreds of incoming requests from our veterans and participate in various outreach programs throughout our communities every week so that our office can be as helpful and as accessible to our veterans as possible. I am proud of all the work that Chris and Frances have done and continue to do to fight for our veterans.

Chris and Frances have helped veterans get wrongly accumulated debt canceled to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. We have ensured that veterans are receiving their benefits, and assisted veterans in changing their disability rating to match the reality of their current conditions. Veterans that have served our Nation should never have to worry about having their basic needs met or their privileges and rights honored.

A veteran in our community was trying to obtain his 100 percent service-connected disability for years. After contacting our office, one of our caseworkers worked with the VA and got the VA to recognize his unemployability. This deems the veteran 100 percent disabled due to being unemployable, and therefore pays him as if he is 100 percent service-connected disabled.

□ 1715

This veteran was swiftly approved, received a back payment of \$6,000, and now receives his annual stipend of \$3,600 per month.

This veteran's casework success story is just one of many that come from our office, and I am super proud of all the work that my team does.

I say this not to brag about my team, although I am very proud of them, but instead, I say this to encourage more veterans to reach out.

If it is taking you more than a couple of days, please reach out, and we can help you accelerate that process, especially with the VA.

Since being elected to Congress, I've cosponsored numerous pieces of legislation to assist our military families and veterans, including bipartisan bills to improve VA healthcare accessibility and benefits to veterans suffering from disabilities related to toxic chemical exposure, provide veterans with PTSD access to therapy dogs, and create a global war on terror memorial on the National Mall.

I will continue to work on behalf of our Nation's veterans, through both

casework and legislation, to help bring needed assistance and honor to those that served our country.

God bless all those who have served. You shouldn't have to call your Member of Congress to get help, but we are honored to help you and serve you, and we encourage all veterans to reach out if they need the help. Mr. Speaker, the VA needs to do better for our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), a fellow conservative, someone who has been a mentor and a leader not only in this body but in the classrooms herself, and she is the chair of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, President Biden is waging a war on America's workforce. First, he made the anti-worker PRO Act a legislative priority.

Then his Department of Labor proposed a rule to extinguish opportunities for workers who want to be independent contractors.

Now his handpicked nominee, Julie Su, has barely made it through the Democrat-controlled Senate HELP Committee on a party-line vote, paving the way for her to head the agency overseeing our Nation's workforce.

As California's Secretary of Labor, Su was the architect and chief enforcer of AB 5, a bill that mirrors current Federal anti-worker proposals like the PRO Act and DOL's proposed rule.

Nearly 80 percent of independent contractors prefer their current status to traditional employment. AB 5 forced many independent contractors to be reclassified or lose work opportunities. Many Californians lost their livelihoods. Most rejected the bill through a Statewide referendum.

AB 5 sank in such spectacular fashion that over 100 industry exemptions were created; from recording artists and song writers to dog walkers and home cleaners.

This is the policy that Democrats tacitly endorsed by supporting Julie Su for Secretary of Labor. I have talked at length with independent contract workers whose livelihoods are put in peril by Julie Su.

Let me explain her nomination and confirmation from their perspective. In the eyes of truckers, Su places 350,000 owner-operator jobs at risk. Truckers worked tirelessly to keep our economy afloat during the pandemic. This is their repayment?

In the eyes of journalists, Julie Su's confirmation tells them the independence of freelancing is not valuable to their industry.

In the eyes of tutors, Su is a slap in the face for those who helped save students from falling through the cracks during the pandemic.

Many tutors are independent contractors, and two of every three are women. They wouldn't have a place in Su's workforce.

In the eyes of every worker who files a 1099 on tax day, Julie Su is an assault on their way of life.

Many Members have rightly criticized Julie Su for her long track record of incompetence, like how she lost \$31 billion to unemployment fraud in California.

Biden has already proven he will staff his Cabinet with woefully unqualified and incompetent Secretaries. Look at Mayor Pete.

I am worried about Su being an activist for Biden's pro-union boss and anti-worker agenda. It is no wonder that industry groups lined up against her confirmation in a rare display of agreement in Washington.

Her destiny might be out of the House's hands, but I can end with a promise. As chairwoman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I promise to conduct robust oversight of the Labor Department or the department of any radical who threatens our Nation's workforce.

We will deliver to independent workers, to truckers, journalists, tutors, and more, much deserved accountability from their Federal Government.

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. FOXX for being outspoken on this issue. I come from California. I have seen the devastating effects it has had on independent contractors; a record number of Californians are leaving. No one associated with AB 5 should be allowed to be in charge of the Department of Labor.

RAISING MINIMUM PAY FOR THE MILITARY

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice support for my bill, the Raising Annual Income of Servicemembers by Enhancing Minimum Base Pay Act or the RAISE Act, which would provide our junior enlisted servicemembers a much-needed pay raise to a minimum of the equivalent of \$15 an hour or roughly \$31,200 per year.

As a former naval aviator and officer who represents a district that has an impact on many facets of our military and defense, I've seen firsthand just how much our Nation has neglected America's secret weapon, our heroic servicemembers. I stand here today to say that this ends.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the chart next to me, this details the monthly pay that our junior enlisted servicemembers currently make.

Starting out as an E-1 with less than 2 years, you can see a monthly salary of just \$1,695 or roughly \$20,340 a year.

That is the equivalent of about \$11 an hour when you normalize it for a 40-hour workweek. Let that sink in: \$11 an hour for someone putting their life on the line.

It is not until they are in for a few years and have been promoted a couple times that they make the equivalent of \$15 an hour or roughly \$31,000 a year.

In other words, it takes serving your country for several years, signing away some of your basic rights and freedoms, shaving your head, leaving home for 6 to 12 months, putting your life on the line, and going through a multitude of sacrifices, for our servicemembers to

make as much as what a McDonald's worker starts at.

This is embarrassing, and it is flat-out wrong. That is why we must pass the Raise Minimum Base Pay Act or work this initiative into this year's National Defense Authorization Act to get our servicemembers the pay raise that they so desperately need right now. About 30 percent of our enlisted troops actually qualify for food stamps.

I will not stand here at this podium and feign support for big bills that provide small support for our troops. I won't do it.

Our Nation faces recruitment and retention shortfalls that we have never seen before, the steepest in over 50 years.

This is a frightening concern for our Nation's security, especially as peer threats like the Chinese Communist Party continue to grow—not just in terms of head count and technologies—their military capabilities with their eyes fixated on a potential invasion of Taiwan and the elimination long term of the United States.

Yes, right now we must get our servicemembers a pay raise and continue to improve quality-of-life issues for them so that we can strengthen our military's positioning, strengthen its recruitment and retention, and get our servicemembers a much-needed pay raise.

Mr. Speaker, any NDAA this year that fails to adequately address this issue fails to take care of our most precious weapon system, our troops, is not a good NDAA.

It is way past due to do what is right for the warfighter. Mr. Speaker, I am committed to doing so this year.

A PINCH OF SALT

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage both parties in this Chamber to add a pinch of salt to our legislative diets for the sake of the middle-class taxpayers.

The 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act or TCJA was the catalyst under the previous Trump administration that fueled the booming economy from 2018 through 2020 before COVID impacted us and before President Biden and Speaker PELOSI went on their out-of-control spending sprees.

These out-of-control spending sprees ultimately led to record-high debt and record-high inflation rates that we are very familiar with here today.

The TCJA or the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act actually lowered taxes for all tax brackets and doubled the standard deduction for single and married filers.

Mr. Speaker, the TCJA had a bit of a middle finger that was aimed at primarily blue states like mine, the great State of California.

It imposed a \$10,000 State and local tax cap or SALT cap for both married and single tax filers. What this meant is that if you paid more than \$10,000 in State and local income tax or property tax, you couldn't actually deduct more than \$10,000 of those taxes within your Federal tax returns.

Despite overall lower tax rates and a doubling of the standard deduction, many middle-class Americans were actually hurt by this SALT cap and were net negative within the construct of the TCJA from 2017.

At the time in 2017, a \$10,000 limit seemed like a lot, but in today's dollars, because of the record-high inflation I mentioned earlier we have seen over the last 30 months, \$10,000 now behaves like the equivalent of \$7,000 today in terms of the deduction.

At the time in 2017, only California, New York, and New Jersey were really affected by this cap. Since 2017, the median home value has nearly doubled in almost every State nationwide.

Now States that have any income tax or any property tax are hearing from voters and their constituents that this SALT cap at \$10,000 is actually affecting them, as well.

At the time in 2017, this was seen as a white-collar, upper-class problem, but in California, New York, and New Jersey, we knew better.

We knew that if you owned a home and had a job, you were likely affected by this cap. This is very much a middle-class, blue-collar taxpayer problem in my State and especially in my district.

At the time in 2017, conservatives paid no attention to the fact that the cap was \$10,000, whether or not you were married.

You could be single; \$10,000 cap. Married; \$10,000 cap. They failed to recognize that this was, in fact, a marriage penalty that they were imposing.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to encourage us all to add a pinch of salt to our legislative agenda. Even doubling the deduction from \$10,000 to \$20,000 would still generate 75 percent of the estimated \$800 billion of revenue created by this cap over a 10-year period.

We can still achieve most of the revenue from billionaires with a \$20,000 cap, but we also with that \$20,000 cap would allow middle-class Americans to keep more in their pocket.

To my colleagues on this side of the aisle who see this as a California problem and say, hey, screw California, I won't support subsidizing California's broken tax policies.

Well, I will remind you that if you ignore these challenges, you pretend like these problems don't affect you, you don't screw California because ultimately, California screws you.

Our problems become your problems, our State problems become Federal problems, and our tax policies influence Federal tax policies.

I also want to remind folks that California's GDP is roughly 750 percent larger than States like Tennessee and is actually 150 percent larger than the next biggest State's GDP.

In California, we don't talk about the burden of subsidizing the other States in terms of GDP and revenue, so we should not look at the SALT deduction cap as an issue of States subsidizing California on the tax side.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker. Californians pay way too much in taxes, and Sacramento is beyond dysfunctional.

It is actually offensive how much we pay in taxes, but we can rightsize the SALT deduction limit at the Federal level to account for today's realities, and this would help all Americans.

The TCJA turns into a pumpkin and expires in 2025, but our party and conservatives have an opportunity to address the discrepancies of the SALT cap within TCJA before then, and we have an opportunity to shape this policy while we have the majority.

Mr. Speaker, on our side of the aisle, we have a significant number of Members from California, New York, and New Jersey whose constituents will accept nothing less than a real legislative victory on the SALT cap.

Why should they accept anything less? Their daily reality is the madness of bad economic policies that come from Sacramento and Albany and are compounded by bad policies here in D.C. like the SALT cap.

I am telling you, Mr. Speaker, a pinch of salt in this session will ensure fiscal conservatives keep the reins for another Congress.

Ignoring the issue ensures that the far left will not only regain control of the spending side but also regain control of our tax codes that are going to be up for a vote in 2025.

Congratulating the Hart Girls' Soccer Team

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Hart High girls' soccer team on their recent CIF championship.

These young women showed up and gave it their all every single game this last season. Now they are the southern California regional champions.

They are recognized as one of the best soccer teams in the State, and I would say probably one of the best soccer teams in the Nation.

I recently had the pleasure of welcoming the Hart High girls' soccer team to my Santa Clarita office earlier this week.

I saw young leaders, young women who work hard and are disciplined not only in soccer but also with their academics.

They have accomplished so much at such a young age and have displayed what young athletic talent and leadership comes out of our beautiful 27th Congressional District in California.

Congratulations to the Hart High girls' soccer team. They are a shining example of how great our communities are, and they make us all proud.

□ 1730

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, across our country, K-12 students are preparing to wrap up school as the summer nears. They have undoubtedly faced a tough academic year that, for some, has, unfortunately, been marked by the scourge of violence

that continues to impact our Nation's schools.

This national problem extends from fights on campuses to local violent crime that breaks out near the campuses that induces lockdowns to evil, targeted shootings like we saw in Nashville just a couple of weeks ago.

As our Nation's children recess for the summer, it is on Congress to use this time to work toward meaningful solutions that protect our kids as much as they work to protect themselves.

Since the stewardship of President Reagan, our country has retained and demonstrated a time-tested doctrine of peace through strength to keep the homeland safe. President Reagan knew then, as we still see today, that anything less than the full projection of strength and willingness to protect our own invites attacks from evil actors.

This same principle, which has been employed by our Nation for the better part of 50 years, should also apply to our most precious asset, our children. As Americans, we need to be willing to plainly demonstrate to any person set on attacking our kids in school that any effort to do so will be met with swift and devastating force. That is why I introduced the Strengthening School Security for Students Act, which would require and fund at least two school resource officers for every 500 students in public schools in the United States using leftover unobligated COVID funds.

These school resource officers would be trained, they would be armed, and we would have two for every 500 students. That gives the school the opportunity to have multiple locations for these resource officers to put down any threats as quickly as possible.

Some of these SROs actually exist today, but recent data shows that only about 45 percent of the schools have a dedicated SRO on campus at least once a week. Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. Our children deserve better.

We are surrounded by armed guards here in the Capitol on a daily basis. Every door we walk in, every building we go into, there are armed guards around us. Mr. Speaker, my life, your life are not more important than the lives of our children. They deserve to be protected as well.

A proportionate amount of SROs on campuses for students sends a clear, unwavering message that we will protect our students from any harm. It is critical that we take lessons learned from recent instances of violence and use them to address existing shortfalls and gaps in our schools, from hardening campuses to protect students to investing in the mental health facilities of staff as well as the students.

Mr. Speaker, another bill that I have brought forward to this body is the Safe Schools Act, which, again, uses existing unspent COVID funds that have already been obligated to schools and school districts to improve their

own security and make proper investments in programs that prevent violence.

For example, under this bill, schools would be allowed to use funds that were previously earmarked specifically for COVID relief and train teachers and faculty on how to best assist children experiencing a mental health crisis and provide immediate support when issues arise. If you ask me, that sounds like a great use of our underrun on COVID funding.

Mr. Speaker, this fight is a personal one for me. Like too many other folks in this Chamber, my own community has been touched by school violence when just a few years ago at Saugus High School, my alma mater, two young lives were taken too soon because of an act of violence. We can take meaningful action without sacrificing our duty to protect the constitutional rights of every American.

HONORING SERGEANT STEVE OWEN

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage support for my bill, H.R. 1627, the Sergeant Steve Owen Defending Our Defenders Act. It is critical legislation that would make the murdering of a police officer a Federal felony punishable by only life in prison or the death penalty.

For those of you who do not know Sergeant Steve Owen, he was a Los Angeles County Sheriff in the Antelope Valley in my district, a hero in our community, a family man who was brutally murdered in broad daylight on the streets of Lancaster back in 2016 by a vicious criminal who was out on parole.

Sergeant Steve Owen's death is unfortunately becoming a common story in this day and age. In fact, in 2021, we saw a 60 percent increase in murder of law enforcement officers. This is due to the defund the police movement and soft-on-crime policies from elected officials from the far left, D.A.s who have been hired by Soros to be soft on violent criminals, and it has severely handicapped our police officers' ability to do their jobs and, in some cases, to go home safely at the end of their shift.

This bill, named in honor of Sergeant Steve Owen, is all too necessary right now as our police officers face increased rates of crime against them. It is critical that we pass this legislation to ensure that our law enforcement officers have the protection necessary to do their jobs effectively and go home to their families.

This should not be a tough bill to support for either Republicans or Democrats. The men and women who protect us every day deserve to know that we have their back. They give us a security blanket in our communities as elected officials, we should give them a meaningful deterrence to any criminal who is willing to do them harm. We must do more to take care of our heroic law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line on a daily basis to keep our communities safe.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. JAMES), my good friend and West Point grad.

Mr. JAMES. Roger, my brother. Go Army.

Mr. Speaker, it is in similar fashion that I approach this body out of respect for American life and our service-members, even as I watched the situation unfold in Sudan with shock nearly 2 weeks ago when rival forces started fighting in the streets of Khartoum.

It caught our entire diplomatic establishment by surprise, despite the many risks of trying to get the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to integrate into one structure.

The fighting has been relentless, and except for a brief window in which we withdrew our diplomats, every ceasefire has failed to truly hold. There are pockets of less violence today in Khartoum, but that is because thousands upon thousands have already fled the bloodshed.

I want to commend the bravery of our brothers and sisters and their professionalism, those military service-members who conducted a successful extraction of our embassy personnel, flying missions in Chinooks over 800 miles through the night and accomplishing their mission flawlessly. It was a remarkable success.

I am glad that our diplomats are now out of harm's way, but there remains much more work to be done. Unfortunately, that work is not being conducted with the competency and urgency that the situation in Sudan demands.

Congress was told thousands of American civilians are still in Sudan, but the Department of State, as this administration has shown a penchant for, has left them behind to fend for themselves.

This policy that is furthered by this administration not only leaves Americans abroad vulnerable, but as targets to those who would hurt and kill us. This Department of State is proving time and time again that they are unable to perform their duties confidently. We must look into this as a body in Congress.

Right now, the Department of State is unable to provide an update of how many Americans have contacted the department for assistance. They either can't or they won't. In either case, they will be held to account.

The Department of State refuses to be honest and transparent about the structure of the task force, the number of consular offices answering the need of Americans on the ground, or to describe how those Americans waiting to get out are being assisted besides updates on the next foreign flight or vessel.

There are French planes assisting their citizens, there are Chinese ships assisting their citizens, and there is silence for the cries of American citizens in Sudan being ignored. In a world where we cannot shoot our way out of conflicts exclusively, we need our dip-

lomats to show up and with a plan that will have the full support of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, our President came to this Chamber mere months ago and told us repeatedly that he wanted to finish the job. It is not clear, after seeing what is happening in Afghanistan and seeing what is happening at our borders and seeing what is happening in Sudan that he ever started the job to begin with. We need the leadership of this body to stand up for American citizens when this administration will not.

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, it is remarkable how quickly we forgot the lessons learned in Afghanistan. When we see the situation in Sudan and for Secretary of State Blinken to literally forget some of the lessons learned so quickly makes us wonder how many countries we are still vulnerable in as we move forward.

I want to reflect on Afghanistan because it hasn't been that long and, yet, I think many Americans have actually forgotten what has happened there.

We made several key strategic errors giving up Bagram Airfield: Leaving our allies in Afghanistan in the lurch without any notification in the dead of night, not handing operational control over from a State Department diplomatic mission in terms of an evacuation back to the DOD, and recognizing that we were, in fact, in a warfighting scenario where operational control should have been handed to the Department of Defense.

It was a demonstration of cabinet members under a weak administration not having the backbone to stand up and tell their boss, the President of the United States, the Commander in Chief, that, Boss, we have a problem. We need to be more proactive.

We need to take a step back, rethink our strategy here, and we need to make sure that every single American comes home. If you recall, we were actually bringing home American troops before we brought home American civilians in many of those cases.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING THE 44TH DISTRICT COURT JUDGE JAMIE WITTENBERG

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KEAN of New Jersey). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of 44th District Court Judge Jamie Wittenberg, who passed away last winter after a courageous 3-year battle with brain cancer. Elected in 2008, Jamie was one of the youngest judges ever to be elected in Oakland County, Michigan.

A Huntington Woods native and longtime Berkley resident, he attended Indiana University before graduating