

that, and I certainly join her in recognizing that point.

□ 2045

Cost, indebtedness, hard work, how to get ahead, how to catch our breath, and how to remain optimistic.

Sometimes it feels, to the outside world, maybe because they are not watching C-SPAN, and they are only watching the news that flies off of anger politics or divisiveness or red meat, but so much gets done here.

Now, in my fifth year here, I have mentioned a couple of times I founded the Women in STEM Caucus. I also founded the Plastic Solutions Task Force, alongside my colleague, KIM SCHRIER.

I formed the Democratic Manufacturing Working Group, alongside leader JIM CLYBURN, the great statesman from South Carolina, showcasing delivery and dedication to the manufacturing economy of America. Of course, I am also working on the bipartisan Manufacturing Caucus, alongside a colleague from Ohio.

I passed my first bill within my first year in Congress, the Building Blocks of STEM Act. It was signed on Christmas Eve. I wasn't at the White House for the signing, but it got signed. It was about STEM equity, making sure that more girls and girls of color can get included into the STEM field.

Will our work ever be done in this Chamber?

I hope not, because democracy thrives when people choose to participate in it. Democracy thrives when people choose to tune in during the middle of the week, on a rainy solstice day, maybe to listen, maybe to think, maybe to input. The tens of thousands of correspondence letters that we reply to in my office, the people writing in.

The ideas that come from knocking on the door in our neighborhoods. The Alleviating Intergenerational Debt Act that I introduced because I knocked on the door of this incredible family in Hazel Park, and mom and dad introduced me to their kids who were going off to Michigan State.

Dad said, HALEY, it is really expensive. I said, I know, college has gotten unbelievably expensive. And we are applying for financial aid. He said, you know, HALEY, it's outrageous, we didn't qualify for financial aid. I am a UAW worker. My wife here is a UAW worker. I have \$90,000 student loan debt myself as a parent and I don't qualify for financial aid. Why is that?

So I went back, with a very hard-working member of my staff from Oakland County, Sammi Goldsmith, and we looked at this very diligently, and we found that this is a loophole in the financial aid formula.

So we introduced legislation to change it so that that family's daughter doesn't have to have the debt that dad has. Commonsense solutions, expand Pell grants, expand access to apprenticeship training programs, showcase our unions which allow you to earn as you learn.

There is so much to be proud of, by the way. So I am not just hemming and hawing. I am feverishly working on the solutions for tomorrow. I am feverishly working alongside my colleagues, even on tough days or tough moments, like with what happened with the censure earlier today, we remain committed.

We passed the CHIPS and Science Act. We know we need to do more. We need to fund basic scientific research. I was so proud, as the chair of the Research and Technology Subcommittee, to pass the National Science Foundation for the Future Act, that doubled basic scientific research funding in this country. Except it was just an authorization; it wasn't an appropriation.

I don't know what the rest of this year has in store. I don't have a crystal ball.

We didn't default on our debt. Some who sought to undermine the fiscal integrity of our Union by allowing America to default on its debt, it didn't happen because a bipartisan group of commonsense lawmakers came together to say, no, we won't do that.

Now we have to pass a budget. The Federal Government needs to be funded by September 30. So as the end of the year comes up, we are going to talk about basic scientific research funding. We are going to talk about food assistance. We are going to talk about making sure that students can go to school and get access to food, free and reduced lunch, a guarantee.

John Kennedy, President John Kennedy, gave an address 60 years ago this month at my alma mater. He gave a speech about peace. Mr. Kennedy, President Kennedy, comes from a time when it feels like there were fewer spoken words. There were certainly less tweets. There was certainly less cable news. Those words and the quotes, they carried movement. They carried action. I think sometimes that is what feels so frustrating about dealing with this scourge of gun violence. It is also Gun Violence Prevention Month here in June. We can give the best speech. We can write the most eloquent, smartest tweet. We have made some change.

We passed a bipartisan bill to award funding to States that have passed red flag laws, extreme risk protection order laws. Michigan just did it, under the leadership of our great Governor, Gretchen Whitmer, in the wake of tragic shootings at Michigan State and at Oxford and the nearly everyday gun violence in too many neighborhoods across Michigan. So we did pass that law.

Again, words, the words that I go back to, the words of Mr. Lewis, to not despair, to be optimistic, because to be optimistic is to stay active. It is to stay engaged. It is to stay agitated. It is to stay feverish toward the work that we must do.

Yes, I will speak until my throat runs dry because this moment and this activity, and my commitment to this democracy and being afforded this time in this Chamber is too serious to pass it up.

But Mr. Kennedy, 60 years ago this month, you know, as we think of other trying times, the Bay of Pigs, avoiding nuclear war, engagements in Vietnam—a war that we did not win, that took too many American lives, and we are so proud of our veterans and those who served.

Mr. Kennedy stood before American University and he said: "I speak of peace, therefore, as the necessary, rational end of rational men. I realize that the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war—and frequently the words of the pursuer fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task."

It is certainly important and symbolic to reflect on those words today and in these moments that are upon us as a Nation.

I look out and I use that as a rallying call for our work on the Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, how to bolster American manufacturing, American competitiveness, how to strengthen southeastern Michigan and Oakland County, under the leadership of Dave Coulter, someone I am so proud to work alongside.

Mr. Speaker, it has been 40 years of unimaginable innovation and activity that has taken place in this Nation: In 1983, Sally Ride is the first woman into space. 1985, has Microsoft Office first hitting the stage. 1991, is the time when the world wide web hit our keyboards.

I remember my mother and my aunt taking me to a meeting. What is a website? If only we could imagine what we would be in now; smartphone devices connecting us at rapid speed. The way in which humanity evolved and changed and then yet again, as technology drives us to be together. The elixir of our alive experience here on planet Earth, and as Americans, through love, through connection, and through ability. Those things don't change. The meaning of family doesn't change. The meaning of friendship doesn't change.

In the 1980s it was a race with the Japanese. Now it feels as though it is a race with the Chinese. Open society, willingness to change, commitment to action.

Ben Franklin once said: "A long life may not be good enough, but a good life is long enough." May we all commit to living the good life. May we, as public servants, commit to goodness, to one another, to our fellow Americans, and to this unbelievable and magnificent trajectory our beloved Nation is on.

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

OUR NATIONAL DEBT, OUR SPENDING, AND OUR DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the

gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BUCK) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BUCK. 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 Colorado?

There was no objection.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I will take the next half hour to talk about the national debt, our spending, and our deficit.

Somebody asked how big is our national debt?

Well, Federal debt is \$32 trillion. The \$32 trillion mark arrived 9 years sooner than pre-pandemic forecasts had projected, reflecting the trillions of dollars of emergency spending to address COVID-19's impact on our sluggish economy.

How much does each individual owe?

According to the U.S. Treasury's official figure for the debt, the Federal Government is at \$32 trillion in debt or, more precisely 32—well, I am not even going to go into it. It is just a lot of money, and it equates to \$95,660 for every person living in the U.S., or \$242,570 for every household in the U.S. This is an existential threat to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT), my good friend, to talk more about the big picture of the debt, then we are going to talk about some specific issues.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to focus more on discretionary, just so people understand. The vast majority of our spending is on autopilot, but a lot of us have no understanding of how much the wheels have come off just this year, and this is so important to start the process.

I am going to start with a board, and please understand, if this were May 2022—you remember how long ago that was? Like a year. We expected the U.S. deficit for this year to be \$980 billion. Okay.

So where are we at today? One year later, we are functionally pushing \$1.18 trillion. We functionally have doubled the borrowing this year.

What happened? Healthcare costs went up dramatically. Interest is up dramatically. Tax receipts are down.

What happens if some of the protections we have for the next couple of years are off? Remember, that \$1.8 trillion that we are projected to borrow in this fiscal year, we weren't supposed to hit that for almost 8 more years.

The wheels are coming off, and if you are on the left and you care about this program or that program, understand, there is no money. You should help us go at every dollar here.

So we get into this game of saying, oh, but that is discretionary, discretionary is fairly flat. It really is just not true. It is a lot flatter than Medicare, Social Security, all of those. But those are earned benefits that are about our aging population.

We need to walk through a sense of reality, and you are going to get the punch line here in a moment.

This is just sort of the breakdown for this year's borrowing, this year's spending and discretionary and what the 2018 baseline is. You will notice the growth in spending.

Here is the punch line. We were only supposed to have borrowing of about \$1.8 trillion this year.

□ 2100

Let me rephrase that. We were supposed to have spending equal to only about \$1.8 trillion for both defense and nondefense. Do you remember the borrowing number? It is about \$1.8 trillion.

Every dime of defense and what you think of as government is living on borrowed money this year. You got to understand, when you get the folks saying, well, let's just cut this program or that program. You got to cut every dime of defense and what you think of as government, whether that be the FBI, foreign aid, the park service, our salaries, Congress, the White House. It is all on borrowed money now.

Here is the other thing we need to make part of our discussion: We can't play this game of we are going to talk about discretionary and we are only going to use the last 2 years as our baseline. We had a big plus-up, substantially during COVID. So let's actually use a true linear line. Let's go back to 1990, adjust the math for inflation.

Discretionary is up 154 percent. If you go from 1990 and do inflation, all that growth of inflation, but now we are at 154 percent growth. Defense is only up 35 percent since 1990 if you adjust for inflation.

The wheels are coming off, Mr. Speaker. I am terrified because, at this rate, if some of the predictions are true a decade from now, just the interest on U.S. sovereign debt, if we stay at these interest rates, could be approaching \$2 trillion a year, more than all discretionary, defense, nondefense included. That is the future we are handing to America right now. It is time for great discipline.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) to ask some questions.

How much do we currently pay to service the debt?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. The number has actually been going up fairly dramatically. In the first 7 months just interest carry, just because the increase in interest, went up \$108 billion.

Mr. BUCK. On an annualized basis, what is that number, a ballpark?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Actually, if 400, I think, was the baseline number, with the higher interest rates and the amount of borrowing, you could be approaching 600.

Mr. BUCK. So \$600 billion?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. There are also other things going on. People don't realize, it is not just the \$2 trillion of excess spending that has to be borrowed,

how much of the debt has to be refinanced all the time.

You actually have, let's say, \$26 trillion of publicly borrowed debt. There is something called a weighted daily average. Half of that has to be refinanced functionally every 5 years. Basically that means every year you are bringing \$2 trillion and plus you are bringing a few trillion additional to market, and now those new issued bonds are at the new much higher interest rates.

Mr. BUCK. My question is this: How many jet fighters do we get for that money?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Interest is killing us.

Mr. BUCK. Let me ask another one: How many submarines, nuclear submarines, do we get for that money? How many people get help, food for pregnant moms? How many do we feed with that money?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Congressman BUCK, one of the best ways to think about this—the budget window we are working on in functionally about 9 budget years, interest is going to be more than all of defense. That is already baked into the cake.

Mr. BUCK. All right. We are going to start talking about what we can do about that. I thank my friend from Arizona for joining us tonight and giving us that advice.

Folks, you may have heard of Dave Ramsey. He has helped millions of Americans get out of debt, turn the corner on their finances. May have read one of his books or taken one of his classes.

The key to his get out of debt programs, he offers simple steps. These are reasonable measures that anyone can take. The first step he often recommends is to make a list of your current debt and your current spending. The actual first step is to decide that you are done being in debt.

Our Nation's debt stands at, as we just heard, almost \$32 trillion. We need a Dave Ramsey program here in Washington, D.C. The United States debt stands at \$32 trillion. Every year, the Government Accountability Office puts together reports on wasteful spending and ineffective programs in the Federal Government. These reports, if read and applied, would help us streamline government programs, reduce waste, minimize fraudulent payments, create oversight, and greater accountability to taxpayers.

As we head into the appropriation season, I am asking all of my colleagues to join with me and others who have read these roadmaps from the Government Accountability Office with recommendations for how we can reduce Federal spending, save taxpayer funds, and most importantly, start paying down the debt.

Here are some key findings from the General Accounting Office. In 2022, 18 Federal agencies reported an estimated \$247 billion in improper payments. Over the past two decades, the Federal Government wasted \$2.4 trillion on payment errors. Federal taxpayers pay \$2

billion each year maintaining empty government buildings. GAO identified \$552.7 billion spent on duplicate and redundant programs in 2022.

If our Nation is ever going to dig its way out of this debt, we will have to start tackling wasteful spending. That includes going after the improper payments made in error.

What is an improper payment? First, fraud. An individual or business willfully stealing from the government. Secondly, mistaken identity. Payments going to the wrong person. Third, payments going to a deceased person.

Here is just one example: More than 47 percent of the payments to the Veterans Administration Department, particular program in the VA, made in 2022 were improper. Let me say that again: More than 47 percent. That is almost half of the payments in one program. The good news is that is an improvement because 5 years ago that number was at 100 percent of that program's budget. One hundred percent went to the wrong people and they are down to just 50 percent now. Maybe in 5 years, if they keep going at this rate, they will be down to 25 percent. Maybe not.

In 2022, just 18 Federal agencies reported wasting an estimated \$247 billion on incorrect payments. That is just 18 agencies, not the entire government.

Our government also holds thousands of vacant, unused properties. We pay every year for lawn maintenance, electricity, security, energy costs for these unused properties. The Government Accountability Office estimates that we spend \$2 billion each year just on maintaining these empty buildings.

Another major area of concern is redundant programs. In 2022 alone, the Federal Government wasted \$552.7 billion on duplicate programs. Taxpayers receive no benefit for these redundant programs that create more inefficiencies and run up the costs needlessly.

Unauthorized programs are also an additional source of wasted funds. If Congress hasn't authorized a program, why is the executive branch spending taxpayer funds on it? There are over a thousand unauthorized government programs that Congress continues to fund without reauthorizing or reviewing these programs.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS) to talk about that more in depth and to engage in a colloquy.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado for holding this Special Order and talking about this very important subject.

The reality is, as we are on that tank from "Indiana Jones" that is going off the cliff, we are busy fighting on top of it, but the tank is still going over the edge.

One of the problem areas that we have is this payment of a half a trillion dollars a year—think about that—that we are giving to unauthorized pro-

grams. You can go to the Congressional Research Services and they will give you a full print out. You can get the full display of all of them and when those programs expired.

One of the oldest ones—and I will just pull it up here. I have to scroll through all of these programs, these hundreds and thousands of programs. This is one where the Judiciary Committee has jurisdiction, Mr. BUCK, and I mention that because Representative BUCK and I both sit on judiciary.

□ 2110

It is the payment to the Legal Services Corporation. You know what that is. That is the public defender's office. The expiration of their authorization was in 1980, 42 years ago.

What is the amount of money that they were last authorized to spend? Undefined, an indefinite amount. There was no cap on it.

That is what we have. We have everything from EPA, State Department, ATF. These are agencies and departments that haven't been authorized. Then we have a whole list of additional programs that have not been authorized, but we continue to fund them. Our own rule proscribes that.

The remedy for us immediately is, when those come up, at least under previous terms of Congress, we have been able to actually raise a point of order and get that pulled out, if we can.

Representative BUCK, that gives you kind of a background and an idea of what we are facing, which is part of our huge budgetary problem.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, let me ask my friend a question, if I may.

We talk about authorizing programs. How does Congress authorize a program?

Mr. BIGGS. You would authorize a program—like the NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act. That is an authorizing program. It authorizes us to spend money, and then we go ahead and appropriate to that authorization.

Mr. BUCK. A committee would hold a hearing, would invite in administration officials, executive branch officials, and would review the effectiveness of the program. There may be an inspector general's report about a wasteful part of the program. There may be newspaper articles or other sources of information. You hold a hearing, and the staff would be investigating this before the hearing. Then, we vote to recommend to the whole House whether that program should be reauthorized or not.

Mr. BIGGS. Yes. I am not sure that I knew that detail because I don't think I have seen that happen since I have been in Congress.

Mr. BUCK. How long have you been in Congress?

Mr. BIGGS. I am in my seventh year. That is the point. If you want to authorize something, like the Judiciary Committee, they should be holding these types of hearings because it is just what you say.

The year that I got elected from Arizona, a famous national journal did a study and estimated that the Department of Defense was wasting \$125 billion annually. Well, that is one of those things where you probably would want to bring it in. Actually, in this instance, the NDAA, those hearings on authorization, you would be talking about if there is really that much waste there and what we do to recover that waste and prevent it.

We just don't do enough of that in Congress. We are just so busy, again, like I said, trimming around the edges. We are not getting at the core of the problem.

Mr. BUCK. We have just identified the process for one agency or one program to be reauthorized. We are talking about 1,100 unauthorized programs that Congress needs to authorize before it appropriates money to them. That is not even including the 325 programs that will need to be reauthorized at the end of this year. We are going to be close to 1,500 programs, and over half of the discretionary budget will go to unauthorized programs.

Mr. BIGGS. That is why I support what I call the Buck plan. The Buck plan calls upon Congress, the majority in this case, in every committee to have a subcommittee that is looking at the authorization jurisdiction of that committee and then makes the recommendations, has the hearings. Let's do this right.

Transparency is important, but beyond that, the process is broken. If we are going to try to get a handle on our out-of-control spending, you would think we would want to fix the process as much as anything.

I commend Representative BUCK.

For those watching at home, both of you, Representative BUCK has put together this plan, has been championing this plan, and I am behind that plan all the way. I think it is something we must do. It should be part of any appropriations process going forward.

Mr. BUCK. I thank my friend for that compliment. I have really just stolen a lot of ideas from a lot of people and tried to put them together in one place.

One of the things that aggravates me the most about unauthorized programs—and I am so happy that you raised it and are talking about it—is that it really was a fraud on Members of Congress.

For example, with the Endangered Species Act, it was a problem with eagles and this chemical called DDT. It was thinning the eagles' eggs, and the eagles weren't reproducing, so we had a declining bald eagle population in the United States.

We passed the Endangered Species Act, but the promise to the Members of Congress is: We will review this every 5 years. This isn't going to go on forever, folks. When we take care of this bald eagle problem and a few other critters, we are going to be done with this program.

I think Ronald Reagan said that the closest thing to eternal life on this planet is a Federal program, and that is what we have seen. Congress doesn't bother reauthorizing these programs, so they just go on and on because we would have to actually make a tough decision if we were going to reauthorize these programs, amend these programs, or cut these programs. Nobody wants to make a tough decision. It is much easier just to make our grandchildren pay a huge debt because we are too lazy, too unfocused, to actually do our job.

Mr. BIGGS. We are too fearful because every program that gets created creates a constituency, and you have to look somebody in the eye and say that program is no longer necessary.

The ESA is a perfect example of that. It has basically run amuck. It is why California doesn't build storage facilities for water, which impacts the entire western half of the United States. It is why we had someone who wanted to stop any building in Arizona. They tried to get the Sonoran Desert tortoise to be declared an endangered species, but they had to stop counting when they got over 3 million of them. They said, well, that is not really an endangered species. That would have impacted the entire State because they are found everywhere in Arizona. It is an example of one of those eternal programs that you and President Reagan talked about.

Mr. BUCK. The Endangered Species Act is no longer used as a shield. It is now used as a sword, yet we don't authorize it. We don't hold hearings, and we don't examine the impact of the Endangered Species Act. Parts of it undoubtedly are good, but a large part of it is a program that needs to either be cut, amended, or certainly examined.

Mr. Speaker, I invite our good friend from Virginia, who has a wealth of information for Americans, to join us and tell us what he knows.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOOD).

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, that won't take very long.

I thank my good friend from Colorado, Mr. BUCK, for his leadership on this Special Order on this critical issue tonight.

One of the key responsibilities, if not the number one responsibility, of the House of Representatives is to protect the fiscal and economic health of the country and the government, at least our ability to meet our obligations, our ability to fund our priorities, our ability to borrow when necessary—not to the degree that we do today—in times of crisis.

I want to make a couple of key points, if I may. Before the pandemic hit, before the China virus reached our shores, our annual spending was about \$4.4 trillion. Spending this year is projected to be about \$6.2 trillion, so an increase of \$1.8 trillion, or about 40 percent, over 4 years.

The most ambitious of the somewhat serious proposals in this majority Con-

ference to deal with the spending or to cut spending this year in this Congress is to cut about \$130 billion. That is the most ambitious of what I would say is serious that is getting any traction in this Congress—in other words, to cut from a projected \$1.6 trillion of non-mandatory, discretionary spending to \$1.47 trillion.

□ 2120

Think about that \$130 billion, which is the ambitious plan. That is the stretch goal. It represents less than 10 percent of the increase in spending from pre-COVID to today over 4 years.

We have grown our spending in the discretionary spending by \$1.8 trillion in 4 years, and yet we are only projecting to cut it or even suggesting to cut it by \$130 billion.

Said another way, we are on track to have a deficit this year of somewhere between \$1.5 trillion and \$2 trillion. Revenues are down, spending is up. Again, the most ambitious, the stretch goal of the somewhat serious plans in this Congress is to cut spending by \$130 billion. Less than 10 percent of the projected deficit.

If we got through the \$1.47, we would retain 90 percent of the projected deficit this year. In addition to it crushing us from a fiscal future standpoint, it is unsustainable. As you know better than I, we are on track to hit some \$53 trillion in national debt in 10 years, if we don't have any new emergency exceptional special spending, but just on the current track—unsustainable.

Our friend from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT) talked about the interest on the debt and how that is growing, and it is just unsustainable. Even in the immediacy, the American people are getting crushed today by this spending.

The massive inflation we haven't seen in 40 years, a diminishing purchasing power by some 15–16 percent on average over the last 2 years. In other words, \$1,000 2 years ago is worth \$850 today. It is even worse in the essentials. Groceries are up much higher. Everybody needs to buy groceries. Utility costs are much higher. Energy costs in terms of gasoline at the pump, which is probably the biggest factor that impacts senior citizens, low-income, fixed-income, middle-income Americans, or anybody else. Housing costs are through the roof.

We have inflation crushing the American people. How have we responded to the inflationary costs?

We are crushing them with the massive increase in interest rates historically utilized to combat a hot economy to try to head off inflation, to cool the economy—that is the theory. I never really agreed with that theory, but that is the theory.

Instead, what we are doing, we caused the inflation, not from a hot economy, but we caused the inflation from the massive spending. What we are doing is this futile attempt to combat inflation by raising interest rates.

We went from an average mortgage rate being about 3 percent a year ago to now 7 percent. That extra 4 percent—figure an average mortgage is \$300,000 in today's prices. So, 4 percent of \$300,000 is \$12,000, divide that by monthly. The average mortgage is \$1,000 a month more than it was a year ago. That doesn't even account for the higher costs in housing, utility costs, and the grocery costs. All of that is primarily a result of the massive spending that is just crushing the American people. It is crushing their purchasing power. It is crushing their ability for their kids or their grandkids to make a start, buy a home, establish themselves in their young career. It is a result of the disastrous policies by this administration.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. BUCK for his leadership on this all important issue and keeping the attention where it belongs.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I would love to ask Mr. GOOD a couple questions.

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. No tough ones.

Mr. BUCK. As a fellow deficit hawk, you heard about the vacant buildings that the Federal Government owns. I think the most accurate number I have heard is 77,000 vacant or underutilized buildings that the Federal Government owns. There have been some estimates that it is a little bit lower than that, but anywhere in that range is absolutely incredible to me.

It costs approximately \$2 billion a year to just keep those vacant buildings up to speed, whether it is the electricity, the security, the lawn maintenance, all those things—\$2 billion a year. We also spend billions of dollars to house Federal employees in office buildings that are privately owned.

This has been going on for 10 years. The GAO has been reporting this to Congress. My question to my good friend—and I am not accusing my good friend at all—why doesn't Congress—this is the worst part of it—the GAO, the Government Accounting Office, is a congressional office. Why do we pay for reports to find out about the waste and then ignore the reports that we are paying for about how the executive branch wastes money? What is the answer?

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, we work for the American people, the GAO works for us, and by extension the American people. So 77,000 buildings approximately, as you mentioned, it costs a couple billion dollars a year to sustain those buildings, the maintenance of those buildings, operate those buildings, maintain them, staff them, whatever it might be.

What about the value of the 77,000 buildings?

Why wouldn't we sell those buildings and realize the revenue to the Treasury?

Not just the \$2 billion a year of not having to maintain those buildings. Let's just say that the average value of that building is \$100,000. Let's be real conservative, let's say it is a million dollars—77,000. What is that?

That is \$77 billion worth of assets if the average building was worth a million dollars. If it is only worth \$100,000 on average, that is \$7.7 billion. That would be not much more than a rounding error, the way that we spend money in the trillions here. When you take that over time, it ends up to be a few billion here, a few billion there, and before long you are talking about real money.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it be a great idea to tell the executive branch that when they get done selling 10 percent of these buildings or 20 percent of these buildings they will start seeing funding again?

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not a perceived viewing audience.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, before talking about the main event of three issues, it occurs to me it has been a while since we really have addressed what should be the end to the Ukraine-Russian war.

In the past I have expressed frustration, and I still have this frustration as to why the Biden administration is not trying to work towards an end to the war? Eventually every war ends. The longer the war drags on, the worst it is for all involved.

Ukraine has the second lowest birth rate in the world. It is a tragedy for any country to lose its young people, but particularly for a country that has so few young people in the first place. Likewise, Russia has a low birth rate, and they also have a high emigration rate, in which people are coming to this country. I ran into one in my district.

Mr. Speaker, I know from spending time in the San Diego sector along the Mexican border, a lot of Russians have come across there. So you have two countries with a shortage of young people, and they are dying in a war. For humanitarian reasons we ought to end that war.

□ 2130

Furthermore, the war is very costly. Buildings are being damaged in Ukraine to a huge extent, and geopolitically, the Biden policy of letting this war drag on without sticking their nose in there at all for well over a year now drives China and Russia together.

It wasn't that long ago that we had over 1,000 McDonald's in Russia. I recently toured a factory in my district. They owned a similar factory in Russia which they had to sell off. What I took from that, there was a time in the relatively recent past when the United

States and Russia had very good relations, the United States and Ukraine had very good relations, and I don't know why we couldn't get back there if this war ended quickly. It seems when you talk to the Biden people they don't care if it goes on for years.

Again, I make a plea to the Biden administration: See if you can look into doing what you can do to end that war.

Now we will look at three issues that I think all have the potential to destroy the country, and I think we need some clear thinking on all three.

First of all, let's look at the border. There has been a change in the way some people are entering the country. They are able to sign on to get entry to the United States, an app apparently, if they are coming in from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. It is because more people are coming in that way that it makes it more difficult to see how many people are coming in each month, and because it is now in two different places, we begin to lose track of the number of people coming into this country compared to where we were historically.

Let's look at, for example, where we were in May. In the most recent May, 227,000 people came across the border as what we refer to as illegally; a year ago it was 166,000; 2 years ago it was 74,000; and 3 years ago, under President Trump, it was 6,000. We have gone from 6,000 a month crossing in May three years ago to 227,000 crossing in this past May.

It is kind of a dramatic increase and something that should remain on the front page of our newspapers every day until this crisis abates.

Mr. Speaker, it is the same thing if you look at April. Now that we have the other numbers, in April most recently 211,000 people crossing the border; a year ago 187,000; 2 years ago 66,000; and 3 years ago under 6,000.

Again, we have gone from under 6,000 to 211,000. A dramatic increase in the number of people crossing the border. This is not a problem we can't deal with because we have to be bipartisan. It is always nice to be bipartisan, but this problem was solved 3 years ago, and now we have gone up by a factor of over 30.

As we have an increasing number of people crossing the border, we also have more unaccompanied minors crossing the border. People ought to be especially concerned when people who are 13 or 14 years old are crossing the border without parents or even say an aunt or an uncle. Now we are having about 6,000 to 8,000 unaccompanied minors crossing every month. Under the prior administration it was 500 to 1,000. There are a lot more young people.

There was a time when people on the other side of the aisle would be concerned about people crossing the border separately from their families. That was people who were separated for maybe 2 weeks because their parents had broken the law. Now we have 6,000 to 8,000 people every month being separated from their parents.

Who knows if they will ever see them again?

For minors, the lack of concern is stunning.

Recently there was an article in The New York Times that I think the administration to a degree has disavowed, but no matter whose numbers you look at, Mr. Speaker, the administration has lost track of tens of thousands of minors. They don't know where they are after they gave them to people to take care of them. We have lost track of tens of thousands of kids.

Particularly, we have a crisis in this country of human trafficking and sex trafficking that should be of particular concern to the administration. It should be of particular concern because people rarely come over here without the Mexican drug cartels signing off. We can only imagine that when these young kids work, sometimes third shifts in factories illegally, that they were sending money not only back home but to the drug cartels as well.

I talked to the Acting Labor Secretary about what she should do if minors who are coming are found crossing illegally or if minors are found working illegally. She refused to say how often they contact the parents. Which, again, I thought was horrible. If you were an inspector of a factory, Mr. Speaker, and found 15-year-old immigrants working there who shouldn't, wouldn't the first thing you would do would be to contact the parents?

Obviously.

The Biden administration doesn't do that. The Secretary of Labor will not be drawn into even commenting that we ever contact the parents of young people who are found here. We should always try to unite children with their parents.

Quite frankly, I even feel at the border if children come across with one parent that we should hold them up and look for the other parent. In the United States if parents are dealing with a divorce situation, in an effort to keep that family together, they sometimes try and say that one parent cannot move to another part of the country because we want both parents to participate in raising the children. I don't know why we don't do the same thing at our southern border.

On the flip side of letting everyone in, we are also taking our eye off of criminals who are not kicked out. Without a lot of hoopla in the newspapers, the Biden administration in their budget guesses that for the next 2 years we can anticipate about 29,000 people being deported. I think they might have computed it in a different way, but in his final 2 years under Barack Obama, we deported about 460,000 people. In one 2-year period under Obama, 460,000 were deported. Under President Biden, we have only 29,000 who were deported in a 2-year period. It is just like saying that we absolutely don't care what is going on here.

Of course, many deportations are caused by people here who are breaking