

great country. Many have given their lives to defend the freedoms we take for granted, including my Uncle Roy, who died fighting Nazis in France during World War II.

Unfortunately, our military has become a victim of the woke agenda. The Federal Government should focus on strengthening our Armed Forces, but Democratic leaders lost sight of that a long time ago.

Defense leaders in the Biden administration are now focused on creating the most diverse military instead of the best military. They spend time and taxpayer money pandering to those folks because it scores political points, Madam Speaker. It scores points with the woke mob, and the world is laughing at us for it.

Military leaders are forcing soldiers to read books on critical race theory and scheduling drag shows on the bases, of all things.

□ 1215

President Biden requested around \$150 million in the defense budget for diversity and inclusion programs. That is the American people's money spent on this nonsense, Madam Speaker.

If the Biden administration is so serious about prioritizing so-called equity, then no one should have a problem with my amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which would require anyone who identifies as a man to register for the Selective Service. If these folks want to be treated like men, they need to act like men.

I don't support the woke agenda, as you know. I am fully against it, but if Democrats want to play ball, then let's play some ball. Let's see what excuses they come up with for opposing this plan that puts some real responsibility on the folks.

We are all sick of these games. We are sick of the Democrat leaders' hypocrisy. If they insist on going down this road, they should expect the responsibility that comes with it, or we could toss the whole woke agenda in the garbage can where it belongs.

ENACTING LARGEST INCREASE TO SERVICEMEMBER COMPENSATION IN OVER 20 YEARS

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

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Madam Speaker, this week, the House will be debating a critically important piece of legislation, the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act.

The bill that we are considering this week provides a much-needed 5.2 percent increase in compensation to our servicemen and -women. This is of critical importance because we are one of the few countries in the world that believes in an all-volunteer military force, and the only way that we are able to attract the best and the brightest into our military is if we pay competitive wages.

This bill will enact the largest increase to servicemember compensation in over 20 years. That is a very meaningful gesture in improving the retention and recruitment of quality men and women into our military.

Madam Speaker, I also thank the House Armed Services Committee for including my amendment to perform studies to direct more resources to remote and isolated military bases like the five that exist in my district.

Civilian contractor services are critical for providing the services that make life bearable on bases like the ones that I represent. This study will be a meaningful improvement in the quality of lives of the servicemen and -women who serve in my district.

I also urge adoption of an amendment that I have offered to increase permitting flexibility for the Marine Corps' Twentynine Palms Air Ground Combat Center for the permitting of a joint exercise that allows the annual King of the Hammers event to take place in my district.

This is one of the largest off-road racing events in the world. It is beloved by residents of my district and Marines alike. It brings over 80,000 people annually to the Johnson Valley in my district. It is a major economic driver.

We want to continue to see this event take place in the future as a joint exercise between the King of the Hammers event and the Marine Corps. This amendment will make that possible, and I urge its adoption.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I urge adoption of the entire NDAA this year. This will make some meaningful improvements in the quality of life for our military men and women. It allocates an additional \$15 million to the U.S. Northern Command to improve drug interdiction like the scourge of fentanyl that has been affecting my district.

Madam Speaker, this is a good thing for our national security and for the men and women in uniform who serve our country. I urge its adoption in Congress this week.

BRAZIL UNDERMINED THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. SANTOS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANTOS. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to address a grave concern about our relationship with Brazil. This nation, which holds non-NATO ally status with the United States, has constantly undermined us in recent years in ways that warrant our undivided attention.

Just recently, the former convicted criminal and now reinstated President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, hosted and praised the infamous dictator Nicolas Maduro from Venezuela.

Lula's actions have legitimized a man who is currently sought by the U.S. Department of Justice for narco-

terrorism, a man who, because of his alleged humanitarian crimes, cannot even set foot on U.S. soil without fear of arrest. In addition, Lula has publicly criticized the United States for support to Ukraine and has even suggested that our Nation is purposely prolonging the war for commercial interests.

This is the same leader who has actively sought to undermine U.S. currency through their BRICS agreements with Russia and China and who maintains strong ties with the Chinese Communist Party.

Madam Speaker, Brazil is not a minority player on the world stage. It is the largest economy in South America and the 10th largest globally, the 4th largest food producer in the world, the 2nd largest producer of iron ore, and a significant player in the energy sector. It holds strategic importance in the Southern Hemisphere, a fact that the CCP seems to understand better than us.

We should be working to forge stronger ties with Brazil, encouraging it toward democratic and capitalist values rather than standing by as it deepens its ties with communistic and autocratic regimes around the globe.

Brazil's growing alignment with the Chinese authoritarian government is already yielding dangerous impacts on its democracy. Even mainstream USA media outlets' reports are showing an unsettling trend: a rise in state-sanctioned actions against free speech, free press, and civil liberties in Brazil. Increasingly, the country's judicial system is being weaponized, and censorship is on the rise.

We must take decisive action to condemn Brazil's current engagement in suppressing civil liberties, its deepening ties with authoritarian regimes, and the serious risk this trend poses to Western democracies.

Madam Speaker, as the first Brazilian American elected to this House, I implore all my colleagues to treat this matter with the urgency it deserves. It is a matter that affects not only America but the free world as a whole.

RECOGNIZING DONNA FARGO

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

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize a Grammy Award-winning country music artist and a proud native of Mount Airy, North Carolina, Donna Fargo.

On July Fourth, the town of Mount Airy unveiled a mural honoring Donna and the countless contributions she has made to the country music community.

I was incredibly fortunate to attend this event and to hear Donna speak about her unwavering faith in God, her small-town roots, and why she believes that Mount Airy is the best place in all the world to live. It is no wonder why

hundreds of Mount Airy citizens lined the streets that day to celebrate Donna, view her mural, and listen to her speak. Her story and her music continue to touch the lives of many.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Donna on this well-deserved recognition. Not only is she Mount Airy's favorite daughter, but she is also a shining example of the best that western North Carolina has to offer.

CHARTER SCHOOL SUCCESS STUDY

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, it is undeniable that charter schools provide students with excellent opportunities in education, which give them capabilities they can use to pursue the American Dream.

When students are allowed to learn in an environment that works best for them and one that accounts for their individual proficiencies, they flourish. This is a simple fact.

A recent study conducted by Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes analyzed the educational performances of 1.8 million charter school students. The study found that these students outperformed their traditional public school counterparts on multiple metrics.

The typical charter school student gained the equivalent growth of 16 additional days of learning in reading and 6 additional days in math compared to their peers in traditional public schools.

At a time when the reading and math scores of our Nation's students have plummeted, the results of this study serve as a beacon of hope for millions of American families.

Simply put, charter schools serve as conduits of opportunity.

For example, the study revealed that, on average, Black students who were enrolled in charter schools gained the equivalent growth of 35 days in reading and 29 days in math compared to their public school counterparts. Hispanic students in charter schools were recorded as having a sizable leg up, as well. When it came to reading, they were 30 days ahead. In math, they were 19 days ahead.

These results make a succinct and compelling argument as to why charter schools are viable alternatives to traditional public schools.

Unfortunately, the success of charter schools is being outright ignored by the Biden administration. This is predictable behavior, mainly because the educational bureaucracy and teachers unions have President Biden wrapped around their little fingers.

The defenders of the status quo, those who fight tooth and nail to prop up failing public schools, can rest assured that the Education and the Workforce Committee will not be joining them in their future efforts. Instead, the committee will continue to promote choice so parents and students are empowered to choose the best learning environment that meets their needs.

The status quo is withering and dying on the vine. This is sad, but there is an alternative, and that is something to celebrate.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 26 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

This is the day that the Lord has made. While we were yet asleep, O Lord, You watched over us, protected us from the worries of the past, and restored us to face the future ahead. As we face this new day, grant us that same peace as it unfolds. May our eyes be open to Your creative spirit and guiding presence. For this is the day You, O Lord, have made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the week the Lord has made. While these legislators have been dispersed from one another, attending to both the well-being of their communities and the needs of their own families, You, O Lord, directed their steps and equipped their souls, readying them to address the tasks ahead. Now that they have returned to these hallowed Halls, grant them that same guidance. May all our minds be open to Your edifying spirit and enlightening presence. For this is the week, O Lord, that You have given us. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Ours are the lives You, O Lord, have made. While we have, time and again, tried to take the reins, masterminding the course our lives should take, You have safeguarded us from our folly and upheld us in Your mercy. Now, in this moment, we turn our sights to You. We ask that You would grant us the courage that we would yield our lives to You, as well. May our hearts be open to Your design for our days and Your righteous intent for the stewardship of all Your gracious gifts.

For this is the day, the time, and the lives You have made. Let us rejoice and be glad in them.

We glorify You, O Lord, as we offer these prayers in Your name.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's pro-

ceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

BIDENOMICS REDUCES INCOME

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, sadly, Biden wants Americans to believe his policies are working, but his borrow, tax, and spend Bidenomics created a 40-year-high inflation, causing families to suffer from skyrocketing energy and grocery costs and from discouraging increases in rent and mortgages.

While Biden says that his hourly wages have increased, the reality is that prices have risen faster and incomes have actually reduced.

According to the Committee to Unleash Prosperity, using Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the number of hours worked per week has declined. This amounts to the average family losing \$5,600 in annual purchasing power.

The Republican House majority is working to correct this, having recently passed the Fiscal Responsibility Act to rein in government overreach and limit inflationary spending, creating jobs.

In conclusion, God bless our troops who successfully protected America for 20 years as the global war on terrorism continues, moving from the Afghanistan safe haven to America with open Biden borders.