

GUN VIOLENCE PROTECTION

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

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, in February 1994, Caliph Barrett III, Elliott Martin, and Brian McCullough lost their lives to senseless gun violence in Fort Worth, Texas, in the Lake Como community. The people back then said that that was the saddest day in Como history.

A crazed individual with a gun who should have never had one caused other acts of violence throughout the city during this time.

Now, almost 30 years later, people are saying that what happened on the evening of July 3, 2023, is perhaps the saddest day in Como history. Over the Fourth of July holiday in Fort Worth, two separate acts of gun violence, the one in Como that I just mentioned and one in Polytechnic Heights, two of the most loved-filled and caring communities in Fort Worth, had to deal with these tragedies.

In Como, Cynthia Santos, Paul Willis, and Gabriella Navarrete were the names of the three young people who were murdered when people got together at Como Fest the day before the big Fourth of July celebration to barbecue, celebrate independence, celebrate freedom, and just have a good time, but, instead, they lost their lives to senseless gun violence.

I join with the Como and Polytechnic communities in mourning those who were lost and injured over the Fourth of July weekend.

These shootings especially hurt because Como is the community that I grew up in. That is where my mom and all of her siblings went when the schools were segregated, Como High School, the Como Lions. That is the neighborhood that a lot of my family still lives in.

We need to get together, Mr. Speaker. We need to do something.

I don't know much about the two gunmen who were arrested the other day for what happened on July 3 in Como, but I bet you, Mr. Speaker, they are just as bad as the person who was responsible for so many of those murders during that 1994 era. I guarantee that people like that should never ever get their hands on any firearm.

It is our duty as Members of the United States House of Representatives, both Republicans and Democrats, to protect us from people who are deranged criminals, people who are dealing with mental illness issues that most of us should be blessed we don't have, and people who are extremely violent and terroristic in nature.

It should be easy to pass bills like background checks and raising the age limits for AR-15s to make sure that people like the ones I just described don't ever get their hands on a firearm in their lives. That should be easy.

It doesn't have anything to do with people who are law-abiding citizens. I am talking about people who are sick

and people who have caused destruction and misery in communities, in families, and in people's lives.

We have to do better as Democrats and Republicans.

I have introduced a resolution condemning these tragedies, but we need action now. We can't wait any longer. I don't want 5, 10, 15, 20, or 30 years later for people to say that this is the saddest day in Como history again because we sat on our hands, didn't do anything, and pretended that people's Second Amendment rights were being abridged when all we are trying to do is stop really awful, terrible, and bad people like I just talked about from ever owning a firearm.

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CHARTING A NEW COURSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YAKYM). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BEAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, how would you explain to General George S. Patton that an American President believes a drag show digital ambassador gives our military a strategic advantage?

It sounds absurd, but what is even more absurd is it is true.

The United States military is the greatest fighting force in the world. America's warfighters risk their lives so we can all be free. They are driven by patriotism and a sense of service and honor.

Yet, since the outset of this administration, we have seen our servicemen and -women, the source of our strength and national security, sacrificed on the altar of wokeness. Meanwhile, our adversaries are aggressively undermining American interests around the globe as danger knocks on our front door.

As we speak, Mr. Speaker, China is creating an outpost just over 90 miles from the Florida coast. It is all part of China's long game.

It is why they have been stealing our stuff, intellectual property from Americans, buying farmland near our military bases, invading our airspace with a spy balloon, and infiltrating our education system.

While this administration has been obsessed with culture wars, China has been focused on defeating America.

While West Point was teaching cadets about preferred pronouns, China has been focused on defeating America.

While this administration was funneling taxpayer dollars to host drag queen story hours on military bases, China has been focused on defeating America.

Our military exists to provide for the common defense of our Nation, not parroting woke insanity. These far-left policies, Mr. Speaker, have harmed recruitment, retention, and morale.

It has undermined our military readiness and wasted precious time and taxpayer dollars, but House Republicans

have a plan to chart a new and different course.

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act puts an end to taxpayer dollars funding critical race theory teaching, guts diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and eliminates taxpayer-funded drag shows, story hours, and digital ambassador programs. It prevents the authorization of a military Green New Deal.

Under the leadership of Speaker MCCARTHY, House Republicans are focused on honoring the legacy of our Nation's veterans, like the 72,000 who call the Fourth District of Florida home, and ensuring our military is lethal and ready because woke politics won't stop a single bullet or a communist invasion.

We, the people, deserve a military that doesn't cater to any other credo other than America first.

RECOGNIZING TRU MOST

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

Ms. PEREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Tru Most, a freshman at Mark Morris High School, who recently placed first in the YETI Junior World Finals of Barrel Racing in Las Vegas.

Competing against 164 other teams, Tru and her horse, Rockette, dominated the field with a run of 14.722 seconds. Her success is the result of years of hard work. She started racing when she was just 8 years old.

I am so proud of her success and for making a name for southwest Washington, and I am so excited to see what is in store for her. Her talent and her work ethic make our community proud.

TUNNEL 5 FIRE

Ms. PEREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the pressing issue that has ravaged my district in southwest Washington, the Tunnel 5 wildfire.

We have all become sickeningly familiar with the feeling of your heart stopping when you get the call that there is another wildfire in your community.

Over the Independence Day weekend, I and so many others in my community got that call. To my neighbors who lost their homes, my heart breaks for you.

My team and I stand ready to help you in any way that we can, whether you need to get another passport issued or you need advice navigating FEMA. If you are trying to get your military records reissued, we stand by to help you.

I thank the firefighters who chose to spend their summers felling trees, digging lines, and sleeping in tents in sweltering heat.

When I visited that fire line, I saw firsthand there is a lot of gray hair out there. Thank you to the folks who choose to spend their retirement not in Cabo but fighting wildfires in places like Skamania County. Your experience is invaluable and your self-sacrifice an example to us all.

Finally, I thank the volunteer firefighters, first responders, and linemen from our PUDs. We are all so proud of them.

I hope they are all able to take some time off, go to a swimming hole, and relax with their families. The path to rebuilding is long, but folks like them are the reason that our community is worth the fight.

STEIGERWALD RESTORATION

Ms. PEREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Steigerwald Restoration Project in my district. In 1960, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built a levee along the Columbia River to protect communities from flooding.

In doing so, they cut off Steigerwald Lake and created flooding from Gibbons Creek and destroyed a wetland. This wound up decimating the ecosystem and introducing new floods.

In 2013, the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership began the Steigerwald Restoration Project. This project took 10 years. It was a massive undertaking. The team removed miles of the existing levee and built two new setbacks to protect the community from floods.

Thanks to their painstaking effort, port and city infrastructure, State Route 14, and nearby private residences are no longer at risk of flooding, and the natural habitat has been restored.

A few weeks ago, I was able to visit and see how the area was transformed. It is now being used as a recreational space.

I appreciate any chance to get my boots a little muddy and plant a couple of trees. Investments in our ecosystems are investments in our future.

RECOGNIZING SMALL COMMUNITY BANKS

Ms. PEREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize small community banks. Small community banks often serve as lifelines for local businesses and individuals.

Banks like Raymond Federal and Security State Bank have a finger on the pulse of their community and are often able to lend to members in the community when the big guys can't see the value these guys provide.

These small community banks are also able to respond quicker to local events, like a strike at a local lumber mill, by offering automatic loan modification to striking workers.

Small banks are facing a number of pressures like high interest rates and capital consolidations that benefit the big players in the financial world such as big banks, insurance companies, and companies like Apple and Amazon entering the banking space.

That is why I believe when we talk about supporting rural areas, we need to add regional community banking to the list of critical services to protect.

RECOGNIZING NASCAR DRIVER ERIC JOHNSON, JR.

Ms. PEREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Eric Johnson, Jr., a 20-year-old race car driver from Woodland, Washington, who made his NASCAR debut in early June.

Eric placed 10th at the Portland NASCAR Xfinity Series. He competed in a field of 24 racers, most of whom were older and had years of experience on him.

Inspired by his father who was a former NASCAR driver, Eric began exploring his passion for racing and cars.

Eric actually started driving race cars before he started driving on normal residential streets, going 100 miles per hour on the racetrack before going 20 miles an hour in a neighborhood. Eric began building cars when he was just 15, before he got his driver's license.

As an auto repair and machine shop owner myself, I know this meticulous, hands-on work requires a lot of attention to detail and creativity.

I congratulate Eric on his impressive debut at such a young age. I look forward to seeing where his career takes him.

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

CONGRATULATING BRYAN HEALTH

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

Mr. FLOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Bryan Health on being named one of America's most trustworthy companies by Newsweek.

Bryan Health is a pillar of Nebraska healthcare, notably serving Lincoln and many communities around the State with locations in 45 of our State's 93 counties. Bryan cares for over 2,100 trauma patients a year.

Their work is helping grow Nebraska by ushering in the next generation. The Bryan Family Birthplace delivered more than 3,000 babies in 2022, including 58 sets of twins and three sets of triplets.

Now they are plowing new territory in behavioral healthcare. They report they are the first medical center in the Nation to have a designated behavioral health emergency department.

Bryan Health isn't just a business. They are a key community stakeholder, giving back more than \$200 million of charity care last year.

On behalf of the people of Nebraska's First Congressional District, I extend our sincere congratulations to the team at Bryan Health. I thank them, and they should keep up the great work.

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY BUILDING

Mr. FLOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the City of Columbus on their new community building.

The Columbus Community Building is a \$32 million project that will provide 75,000 square feet of space for housing a new Columbus Public Library, City Hall, City Council chamber, and community room.

This project, which took about 3 years, required over 150,000 hours of labor and 1 million pounds of steel.

Columbus is known as the city of power and progress, and their work over the last decade and a half is helping grow the community and setting it up for long-term success.

From their health department to the Columbus Wellness Center to their STEM program, the community is building the infrastructure they need to attract families and the workforce that employers rely on.

Since 2000, the community has grown about 15 percent as companies like BD Medical have invested millions to upgrade their operations.

Columbus, indeed, has a bright future ahead. On behalf of the people of the First Congressional District, I congratulate the City of Columbus, Nebraska, on their new community building and all their recent success.

RECOGNIZING COLONELS THOMPSON AND HOWARD

Mr. FLOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my sincere gratitude to Colonel Kristen D. Thompson for her service as Commander of the 55th Wing headquartered at Offutt Air Force Base.

Colonel Thompson recently completed her time as commander. During that time, the 55th Wing returned flight operations to Offutt after the base's runway was rebuilt.

I thank Colonel Thompson for her work and leadership through the years.

As Colonel Thompson transitions to New York, I also give a hearty congratulations and welcome to Colonel Mark Howard, who is now taking over.

Colonel Howard comes to the 55th Wing as a 22-year veteran pilot with almost 4,000 flying hours, 700 of those in combat.

Colonel Howard also brings years of experience as the 55th Wing's deputy commander, which will serve him well as he takes on his new role.

On behalf of the First Congressional District, I extend our sincere gratitude to both Colonel Thompson and Colonel Howard for their leadership of the 55th Wing.

SUPPORTING THE NDAA

Mr. FLOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act. The NDAA is a pillar of the House Republicans' commitment to America in building a Nation that is safe.

Our U.S. servicemembers protect our country every day, and they deserve the best quality of life. This NDAA provides a much-needed pay raise, access to healthcare, and critical oversight, all while saving American taxpayers billions of dollars and making key investments in innovative technologies and our defense industrial base.

One of the most important facets of this NDAA: its provisions to counter communist China's aggression. It builds up projection forces, increases funding for essential military construction projects, and provides more funding for innovative new technologies needed to stop the CCP.

The NDAA makes critical investments in our national defense while