

supplant the post-World War II international order created by the U.S. and forge a new world order led by China.

Clearly, the Biden administration is distracted from that. Time and again, this administration has projected weakness on the world stage and gotten bogged down by policies that only serve to divide our people and other silliness.

We can't afford to drop the ball on this critical matter. We must get tough on China and restore American greatness on the world stage by projecting strength, not weakness.

The CCP is only becoming more and more aggressive. Here are a few examples.

First is the issue of exit bans placed by the CCP on American citizens, including some of my own constituents. This behavior by the CCP needs to stop. We must find solutions for this dire issue facing American citizens.

Second, I was pleased to support prohibiting the CCP from acquiring American farmland, frequently near important military installations.

Third, we must deter any threat to Taiwan as well as Japan.

SECOND CHANCE FOR JUSTICE

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

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Pacoima, California, a working-class neighborhood that was unjustly targeted by the justice system. It is a community that I am proud to currently represent.

There are kids like Jerome Dixon, who was wrongfully incarcerated as a child and locked up for 20 years because he was pressured into giving a false confession after 25 hours of interrogation without having an adult or a parent present with him. He spent 20 years of his life behind bars for a crime that he did not commit.

For over 25 years, I have worked to fix a broken system that has prioritized stuck-on-stupid incarceration over proven, effective rehabilitation. That is why, last week, I announced the "Second Chance for Justice Package" with my colleagues, Congresswoman KAMLAGER-DOVE and Senator CORY BOOKER.

These bills further invest in youth development and crime prevention programs. They will make our communities safer, reduce expenses for taxpayers, and demonstrate a real commitment to treating children with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting these common-sense bills. We owe our children a system that works with them, not one that is out to get them.

COMMEMORATING 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF EQUAL PAY ACT

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this year, we recognize the 100th anniversary of the equal rights amendment. Today, I rise to commemorate, as well, the 60th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

Women in our Nation have made great progress in the fight for pay equality over the past six decades, but it is not nearly enough. We must close the gap.

Women in Ohio earn 79 cents for every dollar a man earns, and that is unacceptable. This pay gap has an impact on women's ability to excel in the workforce, pay for basic necessities, and build retirement savings for a successful future.

This pay disparity has remained relatively stable over the last 20 years, but this status quo will continue unless we work to close it. We must ensure equal compensation across the board and rightfully pay hardworking women their hard-earned dollars.

Women are invaluable members in every workplace and deserve equal compensation for equal work.

Let us prioritize closing the gender pay gap once and for all and lift up mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and daughters in our workforce.

TORNADO AT PFIZER FACILITY

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

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last week, a tornado ripped through Rocky Mount, North Carolina, severely damaging one of Pfizer's key facilities. We are grateful there were no fatalities, and we thank God for the first responders who ensured our community's safety.

Even during times of adversity, Pfizer's CEO, Dr. Albert Bourla, made an extraordinary commitment to continue operations in Rocky Mount, the heart of North Carolina's First Congressional District, guaranteeing job security for the employees at this site and contributing to our local economy.

The decision to stay and invest in Rocky Mount preserves the livelihoods of thousands of employees and sends a powerful message.

As the recovery process continues, I genuinely appreciate the vital role Pfizer plays not only in the Rocky Mount community but across the East, America, and the world.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the businesses and residents affected by this natural disaster, please know I will stand with you.

SALUTING JOYCE HAMLETT

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise today to salute our friend and patriot, Joyce Hamlett.

It is a surprise for some of us who wish that the news was not accurate, but I cannot miss an opportunity to call her a historic figure in this House.

Joyce made history as being named the custodian, the protector, of the mace. I can assure you, she handles this historic responsibility with grace, firmness, leadership, patriotism, and a love of country.

I do want to say that Joyce was a hero on January 6, 2021. It was Joyce's face that we looked at to get the original charge of getting to safety, of ensuring that the doors were closed. I heard her voice, and I saw her pointing, giving instructions to make sure that as Members finally discovered that we were under attack, we would be safe. She did not move to protect herself. She stood fast to ensure that Members had the right information to be able to be taken to or rush to safety.

Her family loves her. We don't realize that she has a wonderful responsibility of her grandchildren, and they have grown up under her. I have watched that happen.

Mr. Speaker, finally, let me say this: We will lose a great American. I hope as she goes in another direction, there will be others blessed by this grande dame, if you will, and this great American, a person who will always love this institution.

We will always love Joyce Hamlett and respect her for her service to the Nation.

God bless her, and God bless the United States of America.

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RELAYING INFORMATION TO OUR CONSTITUENTS OVER THE AUGUST RECESS

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, we are just 2 days away from the August district work period, and on Friday our colleagues will return home to our 435 districts across this great country.

I know on the Republican side everyone will be holding townhalls and roundtables, and they will meet with constituents and businessowners. They will be with the people that we represent here in the people's House. We have so much to relay to them.

This has been a busy 7 months in this Congress, and House Republicans have

passed a lot of important legislation. We are keeping our commitment to America that we ran on in the last election cycle.

Here is a short list: The Lower Energy Costs Act. We passed that and it unleashed American energy production.

The Secure the Border Act is the most comprehensive border security package ever passed by the United States Congress.

The Parents Bill of Rights Act ensures that parents have a seat at the table.

The National Defense Authorization Act that is full of important priorities and pushes back on radical leftist policy in our military.

There is so much more. I could spend the entire designated hour going through the list of major accomplishments.

The House Republicans also, by the way, ended the COVID-19 national emergency. We rescinded two backwards D.C. crime bills. We have conducted rigorous oversight of an administration that has played fast and loose with the rule of law.

Not long ago, discussion of the Hunter Biden laptop was literally blocked on social media—I mean, literally. We have a 155-page Federal court opinion in the landmark litigation, *Missouri and Louisiana v. Biden*. The court looked at volumes of evidence and deliberated for months and issued a preliminary injunction order explained in these 155 pages.

The court says that the facts show very clearly that the Biden administration and its agencies, including the DOJ, FBI, CDC, Department of Homeland Security, and others, were engaged in a whole-of-government censorship effort. They censored and silenced and suppressed the viewpoints of Conservatives, specifically online. They met routinely with the social media companies and told them to pull down voices and messages they disagreed with, so-called misinformation that none of them obviously can define. They blatantly violated the Constitution and the First Amendment.

The court said that if all of these allegations are true—and that is what the facts show—it is, arguably, the most massive attack on free speech in the history of the United States. That is what the court said, not Republicans. We have been on that and we have been investigating that.

News organizations just a few months ago called Members who dared to question the narrative about the Hunter Biden laptop as conspiracy theorists and extremists.

Thanks to the work of our various committees, not only has this information been verified, but we have uncovered a wealth of information not only linking Hunter Biden to illegal activities, but very likely the President himself.

We will take this time during the August work period to continue to share

all these important facts with the American people. I am encouraged that people are following these developments and they are demanding accountability.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great lineup of Republican Members here tonight to speak during our hour.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN), my good friend and a former Navy SEAL.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Mr. Speaker, this week the House will consider the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

As a former Navy SEAL and combat veteran, I am proud to support this legislation. It delivers on our promise for a safer Nation by providing the Department of Defense with the facilities they require and our promise to protect those that protected our Nation by fully funding the Veterans Affairs Department.

Additionally, it helps rectify two grievous wrongs that have been committed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. First, they are politicizing this appropriations process, and second, by trying to subvert the Constitution and remove veterans' Second Amendment rights.

As Republicans worked to responsibly raise the debt ceiling, the Department of Veterans Affairs told Americans in a press release that Republicans wanted to gut benefits for those that served our country. This was simply not factual.

When I returned to my district, I held a roundtable for my fellow veterans. At The American Legion in Sparta, Wisconsin, a 96-year-old Vietnam veteran named Don told me that he was terrified that he would be losing the benefits that he earned during his service.

The Department of Veterans Affairs are being fearmongers with Don and all of our veterans to score cheap political points, and that is unacceptable.

The Veterans Administration is subverting our vets' Second Amendment rights by sending the beneficiary's name to the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS, whenever a fiduciary is appointed to help a beneficiary manage his VA benefits. If a veteran cannot balance their checkbook, they could potentially be barred from buying a weapon. As a result of this, many veterans have decided not to go to the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

In the Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing last week on Chairman BOST's bill, the Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act, a witness testified that as of December 2020, Federal agencies have contributed 263,225 records to the background check system, of which the Veterans Administration is responsible for 98.1 percent of the total number.

Mr. Speaker, I am a 100 percent service-connected disabled veteran. Make no mistake, the MILCON/VA appropriations bill fully funds veterans'

healthcare, veterans' health benefit programs, and many other Veterans Administration programs to the tune of \$800 million more than Joe Biden put in his budget request.

It eliminates the funding for the Veterans Administration Office of Public Affairs in direct response to their politically motivated false claims about budget cuts.

My number one priority when I entered this body is to prevent veteran suicide. Scaring veterans away from going to the Veterans' Affairs facilities is not forwarding that goal.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on the Democrat and the Republican side to support this bill.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. VAN ORDEN for his service to this country and for his expertise on this, it is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROSE).

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in my entire tenure in Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives will be considering two appropriations bills this week that cut wasteful spending. Before the fact-checkers come after me, I will go ahead and say that I am sure it has been done before, but not in my time in Congress, which up until this year has been done under Democrat majority control.

Here are just a few of the wasteful Washington programs House Republicans are aiming to cut in the appropriations process this week. In the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 2024, House Republicans prohibit using funds to promote or advance critical race theory. No taxpayer dollars should have ever been spent on this harmful, divisive and anti-American theory.

The bill prohibits the Biden administration from implementing, administering, or enforcing any of President Biden's executive orders on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The executive branch should be focused on hiring our country's best and brightest, not on checking a certain box.

The bill even rescinds billions in funds, like \$1 billion for rural clean energy programs created in the Inflation Reduction Act on Green New Deal climate initiatives.

Not only are these bills cutting wasteful Washington spending, but they are also advancing many conservative principles Tennesseans can be proud to support, such as: ending mail-order chemical abortion, directing the USDA Secretary to take action to prohibit the purchase of agricultural land by those associated with China, Russia, North Korea, or Iran, or even prohibiting funds for the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, I believe these are good provisions in these two bills. House Republicans are doing the good work on behalf of the American people to responsibly fund the Federal Government, cut wasteful spending, and return the focus of our government back

to where priorities should lie and not the woke initiatives of Green New Deal Democrats.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, he made some great points.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN).

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it, wokeness is destroying America. The proof is all around us. It has managed to seep into our schools, businesses, publications, and nearly every other nook and cranny of our great society. Even our military is prioritizing diversity and inclusion over strength and readiness.

Schools are teaching critical race theory and revisionist history over truth and fact, brainwashing our kids with a leftist doctrine on what to think instead of how to think and formulate ideas for themselves.

Agendas to defund and demonize police officers are hindering police departments' ability to hire new personnel and to protect their communities.

Radical climate change policies are decimating our energy sector. The foolish push for electric vehicles is increasing our dependency on an enemy like Communist China.

Liberal judges are refusing to prosecute violent criminals and enabling this tsunami of a crime wave that is washing over our Nation.

The continued exploitation of programs like humanitarian parole is worsening the border crisis and allowing millions of illegal aliens to enter the country on the taxpayers' dime and making it more likely that we will be hit with another terrorist attack like 9/11, or even worse. The list goes on.

The fact remains that the left's woke policies plague our Nation, and we must find a remedy before the damage done becomes permanent.

By using common sense—and merely putting American interests first—many of the policies in the two appropriations bills that are currently being debated and voted on this week work to eliminate these woke and disastrous policies. Unsurprisingly, my Democrat colleagues across the aisle strongly oppose these commonsense policies and changes.

The American people know better. No longer should we fund the Wuhan lab responsible for unleashing COVID-19 into the world. No longer should we allow those with ties to the Communist Chinese Party, Russia, North Korea, or Iran to purchase U.S. farmland.

No longer should Federal funds be used by the Defense Department to enforce critical race theory and other DEI policies and sidetracking our military from its primary mission to destroy our enemies and keep us free.

These are just a few of the ways that House Republicans are prioritizing the Nation's needs over a political agenda that throws merit and ability out the window.

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We must remain steadfast in our mission to loosen this disastrous grip that wokeness has had on America for far too long. Our national security, our food security, our energy security, our overall sovereignty, and our national survival depend on it.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. BABIN. He is right. That woke agenda has had a corrosive effect on the culture. Today I was reading a new Gallup poll, only 18 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds are now extremely proud to be an American. It is just shocking. That is the result. Ideas have consequences.

Mr. Speaker, we will go from Texas all the way up to New York.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LANGWORTHY).

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman JOHNSON for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as we consider H.R. 4368, the agriculture appropriations bill, I will shed light on a critical issue that impacts the lives of millions of Americans and has the potential to transform our rural communities for the better, and that is expansion of rural broadband.

In an era defined by information and technology, access to reliable, high-speed internet has become a fundamental necessity. It empowers individuals, educates our youth, grows businesses, and connects us to the world at large.

While urban areas have experienced the benefit of a connected world, our rural communities have been left behind in the digital divide. Due to the lack of adequate broadband infrastructure, these communities face countless barriers to accessing the same opportunities and resources as their urban counterparts.

By investing in rural broadband, we can bridge this divide and unleash the full potential to our rural communities. It provides economic empowerment by opening doors to new markets and allowing small businesses in rural areas to thrive and compete globally. It encourages innovation, creates new job opportunities, and revives local economies.

It also provides our children in rural areas who are often left behind with new opportunities for education, and it enables lifelong learning for adults, offering access to online courses and vocational training.

As we saw during the pandemic, reliable internet will allow rural residents to access essential telemedicine opportunities with their doctors.

This is just a small picture of the life-changing effects of rural broadband. It is not just a matter of convenience. It is an investment in our collective future. It is a commitment to empowering all Americans equally, regardless of where they live, with the tools that they need to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the fiscal year 24 agriculture appro-

priations bill that includes these critical investments to take rural development and rural broadband to the next level.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his very important points. It is hard to be connected at all if we don't have broadband. It is related to health, education, and every aspect of our lives now.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. JOHNSON, and I appreciate his leading this, once again, as we communicate with the American folks about the good things we are getting done around here. That is important. The communication and the openness of the House to the people is a critical element and something we were missing for about 2½ years around here. The COVID disaster that hit this country was exacerbated by government action.

Indeed, overreaction has cost us so much economically and so much to the goodwill and the mental state of many of our people. Look at the damage that was done to our schoolchildren as they lost basically 2 years out of their lives. I think that will be damage that was done to a generation, and I don't know how quickly they are going to recover.

Nevertheless, we here, the Republicans in the majority of the U.S. House, have worked toward restoring peoples' faith in the government by allowing them to participate and opening the House gallery once again. I can have people from my district here tonight. That right would not have been seen just not that many months ago.

Our committee process is open to the people instead of being done by Zoom or some other effect. Indeed, that is very important because there is nothing like being in the room with people to have our witnesses there and have Members be able to look at each other and have a dialogue across the way instead of on the internet with the distractions there.

So we opened the House and are bringing it back to the people and open to the people. Through tours people are able to see their Capitol and just be amazed by what the Founders had in mind when we feel the history here and what it is about.

We have worked on important policy this year, the Lower Energy Costs Act. Now, I can't even describe how important energy is to our economy, our way of life, and for our culture. All of our forms of energy have made us competitive and strong around the world.

It has helped us win World War II, and it has helped us become the most competitive and strongest economy ever until we see the damage being done currently by the Biden administration stopping pipelines and stopping traditional forms of energy driven by oil and gas.

Yes, there is always going to be a place for oil and gas.

When we look at energy projections around the world, it is only going to go up in all the other countries except for the ones that are hamstringing themselves with this Paris accord business.

So energy is the cornerstone of a strong economy, our way of life, and our culture. Oil and gas are part of that. We need to continue cultivating nuclear energy and the new technologies coming with that. It doesn't have to be a scary thing: Oh, nuclear waste, oh, it is going to have a meltdown. No. Nonsense. These are things that can continue to be improved on if we have the will to do it.

Congress needs to move in helping to fund this type of research, and also the permitting process needs to be streamlined so that these projects can move forward.

As we know, windmills and the solar panels don't work all the time. We have to wait for the wind to blow, the sun to come up, or the clouds to go away in order to have those forms of energy.

As far as nuclear power and hydroelectric, right now they are trying to tear down dams because of dubious environmental regulations in my district.

Oil and natural gas are cornerstones that we can rely on 24/7 as base-load power. So what we are seeing is forced conversion to electric vehicles and electric stoves. They are taking away our gas stove. Look how mad people are going to be at home when they have to cook in ways that don't fit how they like or what they are used to or what is efficient.

The latest crazy thing is banning gas generators. It seems the Biden administration is just copying the craziest in my home State of California.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is a generator for?

It is for making electricity and generating electricity.

Mr. Speaker, how do you generate electricity?

Mr. Speaker, you don't use other electricity to generate electricity. It has to come from a different source, whether it is going to be hydropower—again, what I listed—or a personal generator. It is going to be either gas, diesel, or hooked up to your propane tank.

It is absurd what is going on. We need to continue to have an energy policy that helps Americans and helps us thrive. House Republicans are going to keep fighting for that because it makes sense and makes us stronger.

I appreciate the time to help remind people this is where things really come from, where our economy comes from, our freedom, and our basic lifestyle.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend. There is so much wisdom coming out of California that I will stay with the theme.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. OBERNOLTE), who is one of the most intelligent and thoughtful Members of the Congress.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louisiana for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I will talk for a few minutes tonight about a critically important bill that we are debating on the House floor this week. It is one of the must-pass bills for us this year, the appropriations bills for military construction and funding for the Veterans Affairs. MILCON—VA we call it.

This will establish funding levels for these critically important programs for the next fiscal year.

The job of crafting this legislation was particularly problematic this year because many people have heard about our commitment to fiscal responsibility and about the dire consequences of our inability to reduce Federal spending.

Our deficit this year will be almost 6 percent of our gross domestic product—6 percent of everything our country makes just in deficit spending. Our national debt this year will be the highest it has ever been in the history of our country, and it is going to get even worse if we don't get this problem under control.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office in their 30-year projection says that 30 years from now at the rate we are going, our national debt in current dollars will exceed \$1 million for every American household.

That is clearly an unsustainable fiscal trajectory for our country.

So the Appropriations Committee had the nearly impossible task this year of honoring our commitment to our veterans and fully funding the Veterans Affairs and our veterans health programs while at the same time honoring our commitment to cut wasteful government spending and our commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that our colleagues in the Appropriations Committee have pulled off that seemingly impossible task.

The bill we are considering this week fully funds both the VA and our veterans healthcare programs. In fact, it funds both of those programs at levels hundreds of millions of dollars more than the levels requested by the President because that is what is required to meet our commitments to our servicemen and -women.

Yet, at the same time, it makes very meaningful reductions in wasteful government spending on other non-essential programs.

It also accomplishes some things I am particularly excited about. It funds a program to modernize medical records at the VA. It also funds the expansion of the Arlington National Cemetery which is something that I think is a meaningful honoring of the promise that we have made to our veterans to be able to be buried at Arlington if they so choose.

This program is an incredible demonstration of the commitment that the folks in this Chamber have to honoring our promise to our military servicemen and -women.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone to support it and to thank our colleagues on

the Appropriations Committee for their hard work on this.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend. He never uses notes when he speaks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS), who is a good Southern gentleman.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the fiscal year 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Specifically, I will highlight the work that this legislation does to rein in wasteful Washington spending while strengthening our rural communities and protecting our food supply.

Georgia is the number one State for poultry, and this bill reins in harmful regulations that dictate how poultry and livestock producers raise and market their animals.

This bill also prevents the purchase of land by foreign adversaries. Let me repeat that. This bill will prevent the purchase of land—U.S. land—by foreign adversaries, countries like China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran.

Let's take China for instance. China owns 384,000 acres of American agricultural land. As a matter of fact, they have even got land that is close to one of our air bases in North Dakota. That poses a national security threat, not just that, but a food supply threat.

Finally, this year's Agriculture Appropriations bill reins in Washington spending and D.C. bureaucracy by directing the USDA to focus State hiring efforts on assisting rural communities and producers.

So with that, and my colleagues in the House, as we continue to discuss and debate this appropriation bill this week, let's focus on our commitment to the American people and protect our agriculture industry.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for speaking about very important priorities for Louisiana, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS).

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding to me.

This week or very soon we will be voting in support of H.R. 4368, the fiscal year 2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Supporting Iowa's farmers and rural communities is especially important as one in five Iowans work in the agricultural industry. This bill has many highlights that do just that. It continues very critical investment in agricultural research, rural broadband, and animal and plant health programs. It prevents the purchase of agricultural land by foreign adversaries and directs the USDA to focus hiring efforts on State and county offices to assist producers and rural communities.

Additionally, it reins in harmful regulations that dictate how poultry and

livestock producers raise and market their animals. That is especially important to Iowa due to the fact that we are the number one hog producer in the country and in the top ten producers for both cattle and turkey.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Another bill that we have taken up is H.R. 4366, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies bill.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' mission, as listed on their website, is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our Nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.

As a 24-year military veteran and a family of military veterans, that mission is one that I wholeheartedly agree with, and I understand the importance the VA has for so many former servicemembers in our Nation.

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Very importantly, this bill provides \$299.496 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs. It fully funds the healthcare programs, fully funds veterans benefits and VA programs, and also includes funding for electronic health record modernization initiatives.

Most importantly, what I would like to point out is, in contrast to what the Secretary of the VA said earlier this year when he politicized the VA by sending emails to veterans service organizations, saying that the Republicans were going to cut funding, this cuts no funding to veterans or veterans benefits. That still remains on the VA's website and should be removed, and an apology should be issued.

The appropriations bill that the House Republicans passed this week fully funds the VA and prohibits the use of funds for anything that is not beneficial to running a smooth and efficient Department.

Veterans in my district are experiencing enough struggles accessing care from the VA. The President's politicization of the Department is not alleviating those concerns.

We did the right thing by passing this bill, and I am proud of the Republicans for both cutting spending and fully funding our veterans benefits.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank Dr. MILLER-MEEKS for clarifying the record, for her expertise, and for 24 years in the U.S. Army as a nurse and a doctor. I really appreciate her good word on that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. KILEY), who is overqualified to be serving in Congress, one of the brightest we have.

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of prioritizing veterans in our Federal budget by fully funding VA programs, fully funding healthcare for veterans, and fully funding veterans benefits. The veterans funding bill before us this week accomplishes each of these three objectives.

First, the bill fully funds VA programs. It actually increases the VA

budget by \$18 billion over last year's funding level. In concrete terms, this means more tax dollars spent on critical care for veterans, including fully funding care for vets exposed to Agent Orange, burn pits, and other environmental toxins while serving our Nation.

The bill also provides the necessary funds to revamp and enhance the effectiveness of the suicide hotline for veterans and provides funds for the electronic health modernization initiative, which will ensure a seamless transition between receiving care at a DOD facility while on Active Duty and receiving care at a VA facility after discharge from the military.

Second, the bill fully funds healthcare for veterans, and \$138 billion is allocated to address the healthcare needs of our retired servicemen and -women, including over \$20 billion for veterans to receive quality care at non-VA facilities.

Finally, the bill fully funds veterans benefits. Mr. Speaker, \$181 billion is allocated to ensure that every benefit that was promised, every commitment that was made, is fulfilled by the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to ensure our veterans receive the care they need and the benefits they have earned. Today's bill achieves exactly that by prioritizing veterans in the budget, and as a result, it has my support.

PLUMAS BROADBAND PROJECT

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4368, which directly benefits my constituents in Plumas County by funding a critical high-speed broadband project in the A-15 corridor and Valley Ranch communities in eastern Plumas County.

In the 21st century, access to the internet is essential. It is essential for students to participate in online learning and access educational resources, for patients to receive needed telemedicine services, for workers to find job opportunities and engage in remote work, and for citizens to engage in open dialogue and participate in our representative democracy.

Too often, our rural communities are neglected and lack the basic telecom services necessary in today's economy and society.

That is why I prioritized funding rural broadband for my constituents in the Federal budget, and I am proud to report that a project I submitted to provide \$4.2 million in funding to the Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative is included in the funding bill that will be voted on by the House this week.

This funding will enable the Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative to construct middle- and last-mile fiber-optic networks to provide high-speed internet to rural residents in the Valley Ranch and A-15 corridor communities in eastern Plumas County.

Rural households will finally be able to participate in online education, tele-

medicine, and remote employment opportunities that are out of reach for too many today.

Emergency personnel who are dependent upon internet-based communications will be able to communicate with one another to strengthen emergency response services.

Perhaps most importantly, high-speed broadband service will attract new residents, homeowners, and businesses to the region to continue to ensure the vitality of Plumas County for many years to come.

Ensuring our households are equipped with high-speed internet is imperative for an increasingly technological society. Leaving behind those in rural communities is a detriment not just to our local economies but it is also a disservice to our youth and the vitality of their education.

Today's bill is an important step forward in addressing the existing gap in broadband services for my Plumas County constituents, and it will have direct, tangible benefits on their lives. For that reason, I support H.R. 4368.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have had so many of our colleagues here tonight to share not only about these important appropriations bills but also to recount some of the many really important legislative victories and oversight responsibilities that we have fulfilled here in the first 7 months of this Congress.

As I said in the opening, when we all go home now for this August district work period, we have a very important story to tell the American people.

We will continue to share the facts. We will continue to encourage them by the good work being done here.

The other thing we have to do, of course, is to continue to defend and support their faith in our institutions because, right now, faith in those institutions is at an all-time low.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

HONORING MIKE WILLIAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOTO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to recognize an incredible, long-time labor leader in Florida, a man who spent so much of his life to improve the lives of working families throughout the Sunshine State, and a man I call a dear friend.

Robert Michael Williams, or, as we knew him, Mike Williams, was born on October 27, 1950, in McIntosh, Florida, to Bob and Martha Williams. Mike's father worked in the paper mills and relocated his family to work in North Carolina and St. Marys, Georgia, where