

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on National Intern Day, I rise to shine a spotlight on North Carolina's First Congressional District's amazing interns.

First, let's give a big shout-out to Andrea Knight who holds down the fort in Greenville, North Carolina, at our district office.

Here at our Nation's Capital we have Cierra Gilliam, Alice Chatterjee, and Saahil Rao. These dynamic interns and their hard work have tremendously impacted our legislative efforts, and I thank them. Our future is in good hands.

RECOGNIZING JOYCE HAMLETT, KEEPER OF THE MACE, ON HER RETIREMENT

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to recognize Joyce Hamlett, keeper of the mace. She grew up in the tobacco fields of North Carolina to become the bearer of the historic House mace.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Joyce for being fair and getting on me just like she got on everyone else. She has fulfilled her duties, and she hasn't dropped the mace.

Congratulations on her retirement, and I look forward to seeing her in North Carolina.

DENOUNCING THE RADICAL RIGHTWING WAR ON WOMEN

(Mr. CARBAJAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to denounce, yet again, the radical rightwing war on women, which is attacking fundamental rights and putting our military readiness at risk.

Before I came to Congress, I served our Nation in the United States Marine Corps. As a marine, I am appalled to see that for the first time in over 150 years marines are without a Senate-confirmed leader because of this misguided war on reproductive freedom, one of more than 200 confirmations being held up in the United States Senate.

I thoroughly condemn using these promotions as hostages and every single Member of Congress who is choosing to put their radical agenda over our national security, the same agenda that warped this year's NDAA with countless culture war amendments.

Our servicemembers give their lives to protect our country. We owe it to them to protect their basic rights to privacy and healthcare.

For the sake of our servicemembers and for women across America, I urge my colleagues to drop reckless precedent-setting blockade.

PROTECTING BEAUTIFUL LIVES IN OUR WONDERFUL COUNTRY

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, the beauty and wonderment of this Nation is that every single person born in this country has the privilege of living under the flag of the United States of America.

Today, I rise to reinforce our love of country, our love of our soldiers and our veterans, but also our love of justice.

I am introducing today the Chyna Gibson stop transgender murder epidemic act of 2023 to respect those who are different.

This particular bill will provide a commission to understand why so many women or so many trans have been killed over the last decade.

It will establish a commission to study and develop proposals to combat the epidemic of the murdering of nonconforming gender expansive and transgender women of color. The duties of the commission shall be to document and research issues regarding gender nonconforming, gender expansive, transgender women of color face, including, but not limited to, limited access to healthcare and limited access to housing.

I simply want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we live in this beautiful country. I want this commission to tell us the truth and to protect people who deserve to be protected and to live their lives.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, July 21, 2023.

Pursuant to section 201(a)(2) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and upon recommendations by the House and Senate Budget Committees, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President pro tempore hereby appoint Dr. Phillip Swagel as the Director of the Congressional Budget Office for the term expiring January 3, 2017.

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Speaker, United States
House of Representatives.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore,
U.S. Senate.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 27, 2023.

I hereby designate the period from Friday, July 28, 2023, through Monday, September 11, 2023, as a "district work period" under section 3(z) of House Resolution 5.

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

SUPPORTING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Vermont (Ms. BALINT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. BALINT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the public schools. I am a parent. I am a former middle school teacher. I am also the child of a working-class mom and an immigrant dad. I understand so deeply that education is the bedrock of this great democracy.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I am worried about our public schools. I am worried about the news stories about banning books and erasing Black curriculum from schools. These Republican actions are not supportive of our public schools or teachers or parents or our students. This assault on public education does not make us a stronger nation, a kinder nation, or a more thoughtful one.

We don't have any fear about facing the complexity of our Nation's history. Our democracy is stronger than that. It can withstand the ugly details, the inconvenient truths, and the uncomfortable nuance. We have a robust democracy, and we have a republic that can face tough questions about its history.

We need not be afraid of this. Age-appropriate curriculum about our Nation's history must include the hard parts. Our students, our parents, and our teachers can handle it. Let's trust them.

It is concerning to me that in some districts we have movements to prevent students from learning about slavery or the Trail of Tears or Martin Luther King, Jr., or Rosa Parks or Anne Frank.

As the grandchild of an immigrant, a man who was killed in the Holocaust—a grandchild of someone killed in the Holocaust, I know the importance of knowing history. I know the importance of speaking frankly and clearly about what happens when we don't know the details and when we simply demonize a group or dehumanize a group of people.

What we need to do is shine the light of day on complex history. When we use our time here in Congress to fan the flames of culture wars instead of investing in our schools, then we are not doing the job that we were sent here to do and that parents want us to do.

It doesn't matter what your political stripe is, Mr. Speaker, or whether you are not involved in politics at all. Mr. Speaker, what you want for your children and grandchildren is essentially the same. You want a strong education for your kids and grandkids. You want schools where all students feel safe and supported and can be the very best selves.

We know that kids suffer when they don't have the resources that they

need. We should be investing our time and energy into making sure all of our schools regardless of ZIP Code have the resources they need for every single American kid to be successful. That is our job.

□ 1600

Balance is at the core of who we are as Americans. It is not banning Judy Blume or trying to pretend that racism wasn't part of our past and, indeed, in many instances, isn't still a part of our present. We should not be afraid of these details.

To ensure that the next generation of Americans is equipped for adulthood, we have to support well-rounded, holistic education that sets up our children for success.

I have a 13-year-old—almost 13; she will be 13 in a couple of weeks—and a 15-year-old. I will tell you that every time we sit down to dinner at my house, we have robust conversations about the news.

In fact, when I first started in Congress, I used to walk through the door on Friday afternoons and my son would say, "Mom, let's talk about your votes."

We have complex conversations about geopolitics. I don't shy away from talking about the hard stuff with my son or my daughter. I trust them to ask questions of me that are age-appropriate.

I wish that we would trust our families across this country to be able to have rich and complex conversations with their students about curriculum that is often complicated.

That is the human experience. That is the American experience. It is not tidy, nor would we want it so. We are a nation of ideas. We wrestle with concepts. This is who we are at our best. We should not be afraid of this happening in our public schools.

I know the impact that quality education can have on our young people and the danger that lies ahead if we use our positions as elected officials to be proscriptive about what should be discussed in our public schools.

The continued attack on our public education, which is often fueled by divisive rhetoric and often, unfortunately, manufactured controversies, is an affront to parents and students everywhere. As I said, they know how to navigate complex issues. Why are we so afraid of this?

Our continued dependency within this building on creating groups of people to demonize and dehumanize for political ends then, unfortunately, gets played out in public schools across this country. How is this possibly helping our democracy?

I want students who ask hard questions. When I was a teacher, I welcomed them. I welcomed people from across the political spectrum and their parents to be able to come into my classroom and have deep conversations about difference.

It is not about indoctrinating people. It is about having a place where we are

not afraid to talk about hard things. Isn't that what we want for our schools and for our communities?

I fear that we are so afraid of having hard conversations that we have stopped talking at all. Better to shut down any conversation about something that somebody perceives as controversial than to try to come together with differing opinions, wrestle with ideas, wrestle with complexities.

This is who we are at our best. This is actually what this body was supposed to be and what our public schools can be at their best: a microcosm of the democracy.

As a public schoolteacher, I taught middle school. People often say middle school is great preparation for being in Congress for a whole lot of reasons, that public schoolteachers and the parents that support those teachers and those students are some of the most committed, compassionate members of our communities.

They are invested in their students. They are committed to their communities. Unfortunately, they have become targets of baseless attacks that have come from divisive politics.

I have to say, the attack on public schools, the attack on teachers, is not serving us as a nation. It is not, as I said, making us stronger. It is not making us more thoughtful. It is not making us more equipped to deal with the complicated world of geopolitics that we must confront.

I welcome hard conversations, and I always have in my classroom. This is what teachers across this country are trying to do, to hold space for hard conversations. Why are we so afraid of that?

I also have to say, as a woman who has two kids, and my spouse is another woman, I want my kids to be able to go to a school where their teacher is not going to be reprimanded for acknowledging that my kids have a particular kind of family. I want my kids to feel like they have as much of a right to be in a classroom to get an education as anyone else. Why are we so afraid of difference?

For many years in this country, difference, diversity of experience, diversity of background—we talked about our Nation as a great melting pot.

Sometimes it was called a fruit salad. Sometimes it was called a potpourri of experiences. It used to be that we celebrated that, that we did not see that as a danger to our very democracy.

We are in what I feel like is not just uncharted territory. It is dangerous territory for the Republic.

I know from representing Vermont, which is a rural State with hundreds of communities dotted across our wooded landscape, that the public schools are the heart and soul of our communities. They are where young minds are nurtured, where curiosity is fueled, where community itself is fostered.

Our teachers, in conjunction with the parents in those communities, play an invaluable role in shaping our chil-

dren's futures. They deserve to be acknowledged for the work that they do, not vilified.

One of the things that I heard as I was campaigning across Vermont to represent my State in Congress—didn't matter what community I was in—people would come up to me at the end of events and say: I don't want to hate my neighbors. I don't want to feel like the only way forward is to be fearful of other Americans, people within my own community.

I try to live my life here in Congress and as a former teacher as someone who is always thinking about how we bring the community of man back together. How do we move away from a meanness of spirit that is not just corroding our work here but is actually corroding our Nation?

Schools are an important part of people being able to come together and speak honestly about their experiences and histories. It is a way forward for us as a nation. Why are we so afraid of having difficult conversations?

Now, I never imagined that, as the child of an immigrant and a working-class mom, I would be standing here before you. As a gay woman, I never thought that I would be walking in these Halls, but I am here. I have a place here, and I am going to use my voice to continue to ask questions.

What happened to our ability to have tough conversations without demonizing each other, without dehumanizing each other?

We know what happens when norms are upended, when rights are attacked. We have seen this across the globe. We have seen it here in our own country.

Public schools are an important part of building back the strength and vibrancy of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague from Michigan (Ms. TLAIB).

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good colleague from Vermont for her incredible courage.

I know I come from and grew up in the most beautiful, Blackest city in the country, the city of Detroit, where every corner is a reminder of the civil rights movement, a reminder of different movements that ensured that our Black neighbors had human dignity.

Across the country, far-right extremists, elected officials like the Governor of Florida, are attempting to whitewash Black history and ban books in our children's classrooms.

Florida's own Board of Education just approved new Black history standards, and public school students will be now taught that enslaved Black folks benefited from slavery.

The audacity. There are no two sides, Mr. Speaker, to slavery. Slavery was cruel, was inhumane. It was a violent practice that denied our Black neighbors and communities their basic human dignity. It had no redeeming qualities.

Many of the Founding Fathers in this Chamber even owned human beings

themselves. These are just facts. This is our history.

You cannot teach the truth about American history without teaching African-American history.

We must teach our children, Mr. Speaker, the truth about our Nation's history. That means reckoning with racism, oppression, lynching, dehumanization, and white supremacist violence.

We cannot learn from our past if our past is no longer being taught.

We will not allow anyone to rewrite our history. Again, it is so important that this Chamber understands that Black history is American history.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my good colleague from Vermont, Representative BALINT, for really, truly championing this issue today.

Again, being from a community that taught me that oppression against anyone needs to continue to be fought against, I can't stand idly by, even if it is another State doing it, and say that it is okay. I can't stand on the sidelines. We must continue to speak truth.

Ms. BALINT. Mr. Speaker, parents and voters across this country understand the biggest challenges facing America's students in our public schools, and it is not about curriculum that includes details about slavery or the Trail of Tears or Anne Frank. That is not what most voters and parents care about.

What do they care about?

Number one, they care about getting students the support they need, and in some instances, that is one-on-one support to meet the needs of their students.

They care deeply about addressing the educator shortages that we see across the country.

They care deeply about ensuring that their students have the mental health services that they need.

They care deeply about the dangers of gun violence in their schools.

They want candidates to address these issues. They want leaders who will address these issues.

I will say the needs of parents are really not that different from the needs and desires of students. I have spent quite a bit of time traveling across Vermont, speaking to predominantly middle school and high school students about what it is that they are concerned about. They talk about the same kinds of things.

They talk about needing mental health support. They talk about how afraid they are to go to school because they are worried about the epidemic of gun violence. They are concerned that they won't be prepared for the future.

□ 1615

They are not clamoring to have curriculum restricted. They want to have those hard conversations. I taught middle school for many years. I run into some of my former students who are now adults, and we talk about the con-

versations that we had in my classroom that were on hard issues, but they were age appropriate. I trusted them and their families to be engaged in the work that was happening in my classroom.

I fear that where we are headed is a future in which what it is that teachers are allowed to discuss with students will be so restricted that our students will not be prepared for the future outside of their little communities.

History is complicated. It is often ugly, sometimes really distasteful. I studied African-American history and Native-American history when I was earning my master's in history. I studied African-American communities post-Reconstruction, during an era known as racial uplift. I looked at Black women's community organizations and the work that they did post-Reconstruction to have vital supports within their communities. I studied Native-American land claims and the missteps and mistakes and atrocities that happened in history regarding Tribal claims to land.

I am a better person for knowing these things. It did not fundamentally make me a less patriotic American. It did not make me less grateful that my father came here as an immigrant to build a new life.

Every nation has its complex histories, its difficult chapters, its reckonings. No nation is without dark spots in its past.

Where we can rise above as a nation is to say, we will embrace head-on the complexity and the nuance and trust that our students, parents, and teachers can have those conversations, and it will not make them less likely to love their country.

Having taught middle school for a very long time, and community college, I will tell you that students feel betrayed when they are not given age-appropriate curriculum about the hard stuff, and then they find out about it later, and they feel like we have been withholding history from them, that we don't trust them enough to ask the good questions.

I wish so sincerely that we would trust parents more across this country to be able to have a relationship with their local public school and their teachers and together have those meaningful, sometimes difficult conversations.

One of the things that I am also quite concerned about is that we are not investing even in the infrastructure of schools. I am concerned that there are so many aging buildings across this country that in a decade or two they are not going to be structurally sound for our students. It is going to take a big investment of money to make sure that every single student has a safe building to learn inside. However, our priorities often in this building are not around investing in the needs of our children and our families.

I know that bill is going to come due, and there is going to be a time when

parents and communities say: Why didn't we make those investments when we should have? Is it not true that our children are truly the most precious resource for the Nation?

Now, the other thing that I have been thinking about is that we, as parents, need to be willing to show up for our schools and our students even when there is no controversy. Take an interest in what is happening, not because you have any kind of agenda but just because you want to know what is happening in the schools.

I can tell you that most of the schools that I know of in Vermont would welcome involvement from the community, whether it is a community garden or helping to lead after-school programs. What the most frustrating thing is when people are not involved in the work of the school or what is happening there, and there is a sense of suspicion about what is happening there. I can tell you, as somebody who volunteered as much as I could at my kids' school when they were little, I knew what was happening in their schools because I was there communicating.

Public schools are not the enemy here. Teachers are not the enemy, nor are trans people and queer people that seem to be on the receiving end right now of a lot of the vitriol around public schools.

I went into teaching for one reason—alleviating suffering. That is the same reason why I ran for State senate, and it is the same reason why I ran for Congress, alleviating suffering in all of its forms. When you are a teacher, you have to do that in real time because kids come into the classroom with whatever they were dealing with that morning at home, and it is the job of the teacher to hold all students where they are and make the classroom environment a place where all feel safe and supported.

It is not an easy job; I can tell you. Oftentimes when you are a teacher, you get to the end of the day and you haven't remembered to eat or use the bathroom or take care of any of your personal needs because there is only one thing that is important to you, which is making sure your students get what they need when they are with you that day.

Can we please stop demonizing teachers? Can we please stop thinking there is some sinister agenda?

People serve in that capacity because they want to make a positive difference in the lives of children, and sometimes it is as simple as sitting with a student who had a rough time on the bus in the morning or someone who is carrying with them a deep insecurity about themselves and that is getting in the way of their learning.

We talk in education about differentiated learning, and we use that to talk about how students come in with different levels of success at a particular topic, particular curriculum, and you try to differentiate, make it possible for them to be successful.

I have often thought when we talk about differentiated learning, we forget that that is what teachers do day in and day out with every single student they have. What does this student need right now? How can I help them get what they need so they can be successful? It is both exhausting and rewarding.

Can we please stop attacking teachers?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Hawaii (Ms. TOKUDA).

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I am definitely out of breath. I ran here from my other hearing because this was just such an important hour that we participate in.

Patsy Takemoto Mink is the mother of Title IX. She had a vision and a dream for her daughter and for all of our children, to live a life free from the kind of discrimination she suffered as a woman of color.

Her groundbreaking advocacy and reforms have since paved the way to allow all of our children to fully participate and engage in their education, in sports, and in all other forms of learning as their true, authentic selves.

Removing discrimination and inequity on the basis of sex was personal for Congresswoman Mink. Throughout her pursuit of higher education, she faced racial discrimination, segregation, and limited opportunities simply because she was a woman.

Many of us serving here in Congress on both sides of the aisle are here because of Patsy's perseverance and courage, and I am humbled to serve in the seat that she held with such grit and such grace. Like Patsy, I see every action or inaction we take here in Congress through the lens of a mother.

While we cowardly delay action on gun legislation, I leave home each week terrified that one day an active shooter drill at my sons' school might not be a drill at all.

As we fight book bans and the perverse culture wars of the far right, I wonder how my boys will feel when they see less and less of themselves in what is represented as history, and in the books that are on the library shelves.

While we watch as bullies in Congress try to push our loved ones back into the closet through guilt and shame, I hug my babies, now teenagers, every single chance I get, and I remind them, as I have since they were little, of my unconditional love for them and my only wish for them to be whomever they seek to be.

As we fight in this Chamber, kicking and screaming against what is nothing less than a movement to use our chil-

dren as a means to institutionalize racism, legitimize discrimination, and oppress marginalized people and communities of color around our country, I often sit and ask myself: What would Patsy say? What would Patsy do?

I cannot speak for this great tower of a woman, but I know in my heart that she would not stand for this kind of politicization of our children. She would stand shoulder to shoulder with all of us and say: Hell, no, not today. Not today.

Ms. BALINT. Mr. Speaker, we have important work to do in this country. We need to continue to invest in schools so that we can reduce poverty. We need to alleviate hunger. We need to work together to build better outcomes for kids. We need to give teachers a living wage and create equitable systems that don't leave anyone behind. Your ZIP Code should not determine whether you get a robust, rich education or not.

□ 1630

Students, parents, educators deserve more. They need partners, not partisans. They don't need bullies. What they need is for us to stand up for robust, rich education and not be afraid to talk about the tough stuff.

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

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIR OF COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the chair of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which was read and referred to the Committee on Appropriations:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE,

Washington, DC, July 27, 2023.

Hon. KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On July 27, 2023, pursuant to section 3307 of Title 40, United States Code, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure met in open session, with a quorum being present, to consider 15 resolutions included in the General Services Administration's Capital Investment and Leasing Programs.

I have enclosed copies of the resolutions adopted by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on July 27, 2023.

Sincerely,

SAM GRAVES,
Chairman.

Enclosures.

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION
LEASE—U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN
AFFAIRS, THE VILLAGES, FL

Resolved by the Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure of the United States House

of Representatives, that pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §3307, appropriations are authorized for a lease of up to 140,144 net usable square feet of space, and 950 parking spaces, for the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) for a Community Based Outpatient Clinic in The Villages, FL to replace an existing lease at a proposed unserviced annual cost of \$5,482,000 for a lease term of up to 20 years, a prospectus for which is attached to and included in this resolution.

Approval of this prospectus constitutes authority to execute an interim lease for all tenants, if necessary, prior to the execution of the new lease.

Provided that, to the maximum extent practicable, the Administrator shall include in the lease contract(s) a purchase option that can be exercised at the conclusion of the firm term of the lease.

Provided further, if the General Services Administration delegates to any other agency the authority granted by this resolution, the Administrator of General Services shall oversee and monitor such delegation of authority to ensure such delegation is carried out consistent with the law and authority provided.

Provided further, that the Administrator shall require that the delineated area of the procurement is identical to the delineated area included in the prospectus, except that, if the Administrator determines that the delineated area of the procurement should not be identical to the delineated area included in the prospectus, the Administrator shall provide an explanatory statement to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives prior to exercising any lease authority provided in this resolution.

Provided further, not later than 30 calendar days after the date on which a request from the Chairman or Ranking Member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives is received by the Administrator of General Services, the Administrator shall provide such Member a response in writing that provides any information requested regarding the project.

Provided further, prior to entering into this lease or approving a novation agreement involving a change of ownership under this lease, the Administrator of General Services shall require the offeror or the parties requesting the novation, as applicable, to identify and disclose whether the owner of the leased space, including an entity involved in the financing thereof, is a foreign person or a foreign-owned entity; provided further, in such an instance, the Administrator of General Services shall notify the occupant agency(ies) in writing, and consult with such occupant agency(ies) regarding security concerns and necessary mitigation measures (if any) prior to award of the lease or approval of the novation agreement.

Provided further, the Administrator of General Services shall require tenant agency(ies) to agree to reporting actual utilization data on at least an annual basis during occupancy and such reports are transmitted to the Committee.