

speed rail system from San Francisco to L.A. The voters were told the cost would be \$33 billion. Okay. There would have to be a high-speed rail that would go from the two cities at approximately 220 miles an hour and get the job done in approximately 3 hours or less. It has fallen far short of those goals.

They only have to have one high-speed train a day go in order to be eligible to be called a high-speed train. Otherwise, it is going to be a commuter line stopping in every little burg along the way. As it is turning out, from San Francisco to San Jose, it looks they are going to use local electric rail. Passengers would need to jump on a train in San Jose and then take it down to an undetermined point in southern California and perhaps jump on another train there.

We were talking about this last night in the debate, and I mentioned that you could take a Southwest Airlines plane and already be on the beach and have half a sunburn before you could get off the high-speed rail at that point.

What is the cost these days? That is the interesting part. In 2008, \$33 billion is what they were sold. A year later, they adjusted the price up to \$42 billion. Not long after that, when I was still in the State legislature, they actually admitted the price then would be \$97 billion. Today's estimates show it to be \$128 billion.

How much construction is finished on it? The voters were told in 2008 that it would be ready to go by 2020. Well, it is 2023, and not a single mile of track has been laid. They have some bridges and aqueducts already built around Fresno and such, but it is nowhere near being completed.

They are trying to do it in segments, so they are doing the Central Valley segment because, as they said at the time—this is pretty funny—they can build it in the Central Valley, there are fewer people there, so there is less resistance to having it built. They are going to do a segment from Merced to Bakersfield, where it ends up in an orchard somewhere as the terminus. At this point, we are finding they need \$28 billion just to complete that segment, not the entire thing.

It has been a boondoggle from the beginning, with lies basically from the rail authority about what is going to happen with the timeline, the environmental work, and the number of jobs.

Here is another good one: They were promising there would be a million jobs for California. Well, 3 years into the project, they finally admitted it would be a million job years. Currently, they claim 5,000 people are working on the rail, and so at that rate for a million job years at 5,000 people, that would take 200 years to complete the system.

Well, the people who voted for it would probably like to see it done in their lifetime, which may not even happen. I think at this point, why don't

we just cut our losses and move toward something that is useful not just for Californians but for all Americans.

Indeed, we want to do infrastructure around here. Why don't we do true infrastructure? We talk about highways. We talk about a lot of things. I am focused a lot on California's water situation. We have several projects to add to its water supply so it can continue to grow crops and people can thrive in our State, not just environmental water that gets shifted more and more towards fish water and running it out the delta, which doesn't actually help that situation or do anything environmentally positive anyway.

Instead of continuing to come to Washington, D.C., for more money to do something that is only covering this little portion of California, rather than San Francisco all the way to L.A. as originally planned, I propose instead that we shift the money into other projects that can help all Americans.

They don't even have the route planned out for the high-speed rail project. They don't know how they are going to get the last leap from Bakersfield into southern California. Are they going to build a tunnel through there with all that seismic activity? Are they going to go around it? Are they going to go over it? They don't have the whole plan this many years into the project, and they still want more money from Washington, D.C., from all Federal taxpayers.

If they shift the money into other infrastructure that can help all Americans, these crops that are grown in California, look at these numbers, basically 100 percent of walnuts and tomatoes grown commercially are grown in California. Many of these other crops, 90-plus percent are grown in California. Having a stable food supply is what benefits Americans, so dollars invested into our water system in California would go much further than wasting money on high-cost rail.

COMMEMORATING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. VAN DREW). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PORTER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Month and the enduring contributions made by the Acjachemen and Tongva people to our community. In Orange County, we are dedicated to supporting our indigenous neighbors, as they reclaim their history.

For generations, indigenous groups have fought against the pressure to assimilate. They have retained a strong connection with their cultures even when the Federal Government has failed to support them. Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Month is a celebration of their resilience.

We owe these communities recognition. In the past, I have held

roundtables with Tribal leaders and chaired hearings to better understand how our current systems leave Native people behind.

I am proud to represent indigenous populations, to lift up their stories, and to celebrate how their perspectives make our communities stronger. I will continue to be a partner with indigenous leaders and will fight to get their communities the help that they need.

STANDING UP FOR VETERANS

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, elected officials have a duty to stand up for veterans. I rise today not only to honor their sacrifices with my words but to reiterate a call for meaningful action.

Nearly 100,000 veterans call Orange County, California, home. They embody the resilience of our Nation. Yet, when they come home, they face institutions that systematically fail them. For those who have fought for our country, we must take care of them and their families. We must deliver the benefits that they are owed. We must address their invisible wounds by making it easier for them to get mental health care.

In Congress, I have proudly worked on improving military families' housing, strengthening the Veterans Crisis Line, and getting Orange County veterans answers and care from the VA.

On Veterans Day, we thank our troops for their service, and we recommit ourselves to getting them the help that they need.

STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, student debt holds back our entire economy and hurts all of us. Americans today, young and old, cannot start businesses or save for retirement because they are burdened by student loans.

I am glad the Biden-Harris administration is doing what it can to forgive student debt despite roadblocks from a corrupt Supreme Court. The administration's actions will extend relief to 125,000 Americans who can participate better in our economy, totaling \$9 billion that will go back into our communities.

In the long term, we must have a comprehensive plan to prevent another student debt crisis from happening as we fix the current one. I founded the College Affordability Caucus to address these problems.

Debt-free higher education is one of the best investments that we can make to improve the lives of young people and strengthen our Nation's workforce for decades to come.

STANDING UP FOR TRANS STUDENTS

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight how anti-transgender campus policies hurt students' well-being.

In September, the Orange Unified School District became the sixth school district in California to adopt a forced outing policy. As young people are growing up, these harmful mandates expose students for something as simple as going by a different name

without considering whether they are safe at home.

More than half of transgender youth contemplate suicide due to a lack of support from their family or community. Schools should be places where students can focus on learning, free from fear.

As a single mom of three, I rely on public schools to help my kids mature into thoughtful and confident citizens, and I oppose misguided policies that endanger LGBTQ+ Americans.

I urge all California schools to stand up for trans students and protect the safety of queer youth.

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RENAMING FORT GORDON TO FORT EISENHOWER

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

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the formal renaming of Fort Gordon to Fort Eisenhower, a well-known name in history throughout the world.

Located in Augusta, Georgia, this military base has experienced a major transformation over the last 10 years and is widely considered a top-tier installation that will continue to grow, all while training and housing thousands of the best and brightest who serve our country.

As the home of the Eisenhower Medical Center, which provides top-notch healthcare services for our veterans and men and women in uniform, as well as the U.S. Army Cyber Command and the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence, this renaming is a true representation of President Eisenhower's commitment to science and innovation and his love for the surrounding community that he so frequently visited for fellowship and sport.

A beloved visitor of Augusta, President Eisenhower's deep ties and admiration for the area were well known. My team and I worked side by side with local community members to ensure that if the base was to be renamed, its new name would reflect both the history of our community and the significance of the mission.

President Eisenhower made 45 trips to Augusta—5 before he became President, 29 while in office, and 11 after his first term—taking full advantage of all that our community has to offer, including the world-renowned Augusta National Golf Club, one of his favorite destinations.

President Eisenhower always found time for his faith, as well. At the Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church in Augusta, there is a pew known as the Eisenhower pew. It has a plaque on it where the former President would worship when he was in town.

With a name like Fort Eisenhower and the international renown that comes with it, as well as the critical missions housed there, this military base will endure from now on.

As President Eisenhower's granddaughter Susan Eisenhower stated at the renaming ceremony: "If Dwight Eisenhower were here today, he would be full of heartfelt appreciation for the focus and dedication this community has placed on serving our country and keeping it safe."

I couldn't agree more.

RELEASE OF CUBAN PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, two years ago, thousands of Cubans peacefully demonstrated for their basic rights, and their corrupt rulers responded with a brutal, indiscriminate crackdown.

Maykel Castillo Perez and Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara both helped forge the historic and resurgent pro-democracy movement on July 11. They have been imprisoned ever since. Maykel, a Latin Grammy-winning rapper, coauthored the song "Patria Y Vida," an anthem for the mass demonstrations. Luis Manuel, an Afro-Cuban visual artist, has fought passionately for free expression and against censorship.

Maykel disappeared from public view after being detained without a warrant on May 18, 2021, and a kangaroo court sentenced him to 9 years in prison. The U.N. reports Maykel remains in prison "solely for his prodemocracy activism," enduring inmate threats, solitary confinement, and denied family visits and medical attention. Yet he still rebels however he can. On the anniversary of the July 11 protests, he sewed his mouth shut and tattooed "Patria Y Vida" on his arm. Maykel told friends: "I have enough strength to keep bleeding . . . I prefer with great pride to descend in a coffin than to bow."

Luis Manuel's despicable treatment is compounded by the jarring legacy of anti-Black racism in Cuba. On July 11, he too was arrested after posting a video on his plans to join Cuba's mass democracy demonstration.

Like Maykel, he was tried behind closed doors and thrown in a maximum security prison. Due to abuse, bad medical care, and denial of food and water, Luis Manuel is suffering from extreme weight loss and severe medical issues.

I am grateful the Biden administration granted humanitarian parole to both Luis Manuel and Maykel, but for the Cuban regime, exiling these patriots isn't enough. Their very existence is a threat.

While these cases are egregious, thousands of peaceful prodemocracy protesters have been jailed, tortured, or killed. If we truly intend to live up to our Nation's values, we must work tirelessly to liberate those who continually sacrifice their freedom for others.

As co-chair of the Cuba Democracy Caucus, I proudly join forces with Free-

dom House and Amnesty International to demand justice for Maykel and Luis Manuel through the Defending Freedoms Project.

I intend to use my platform to ensure their unconditional release is a top priority in any discussion of Cuba policy.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me.

(Spanish translation of the statement made in English is as follows:)

Hoy me levanto para exigir la liberación inmediata de dos presos de conciencia cubanos. Maykel Castillo Pérez y Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara ayudaron a empezar el movimiento pro-democracia el once de julio.

Ellos están encarcelados desde ese día. Maykel, rapero y ganador del Grammy Latino, es coautor de la canción "Patria y Vida" que fue himno de las protestas.

Luis Manuel es un artista visual afrocubano que ha luchado duro por la libre expresión y contra la censura.

Maykel desapareció de la vista del público tras ser detenido sin orden judicial, y un tribunal irregular lo condenó a nueve años de prisión.

Según el informe de las Naciones Unidas, Maykel sigue encarcelado "únicamente por su activismo a favor de la democracia".

Sin embargo, todavía se manifiesta como puede. En el aniversario de las protestas, se cosió la boca y se tatuó "Patria Y Vida" en el brazo.

El trato despreciable recibido por Luis Manuel se ve agravado por el preocupante legado del racismo contra los Afrocubanos.

También fue arrestado luego de publicar un video sobre sus planes de unirse a manifestaciones masivas por la democracia en Cuba.

Al igual que Maykel, fue condenado y encarcelado atrás de una prisión de máxima seguridad. Luis Manuel a sufrido una pérdida extrema de peso y graves problemas médicos.

Agradezco que President Biden esté ofreciendo libertad humanitaria a Luis Manuel y Maykel, pero para la dictadura cubana exiliarlos no es suficiente. Su propia existencia es una amenaza.

Si queremos estar a la altura de los valores de nuestra nación, debemos trabajar todos los días para liberar a los que sacrifican por los demás. Como copresidenta del Caucus para la Democracia en Cuba, voy a luchar al lado de Freedom House y Amnistía Internacional para demandar justicia para Maykel y Luis Manuel.

Voy a hacer todo lo posible para abogar por su liberación incondicional.

Espero que mis colegas de ambos partidos se unan a mí.

I'd like to share more about these brave patriots, in their own words and those of people who know them well. The following is a letter written by Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara to the Miami Herald, entitled: 'Cuba's authorities have stolen my youth just for speaking my mind'. It was published July 10th of this year, two years after his arbitrary arrest.