

data shows a glimmer of hope: Gun homicides are down slightly from 2021.

We have seen this reduction in places like Philadelphia and Chester as a host of community violence prevention programs, funded by the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, take hold.

Tragically, the data also shows gun suicides reached a record high last year with nearly 27,000 people across the United States dying from gun suicide. More than half of gun deaths in Pennsylvania alone were from suicides last year.

We have ways to reduce gun suicide in this country, red flag laws, safe storage, and waiting periods, all of which have been proven to reduce gun suicide, but the NRA and extremist Republicans continue to block these commonsense constitutional measures which can save lives.

When we speak about gun violence, we often say there are solutions, research-based solutions. We don't have to live this way. Today, I will add that in the case of gun suicide, we should also be mindful that people don't have to die this way.

By creating legal space between a person in crisis and access to a firearm, more people will live and more families will be spared the immeasurable pain of losing a loved one. We need Congressional action now.

#### ELECTION MISINFORMATION CONTINUES

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, election misinformation continues to plague our country as leaders who know better repeat or fail to contradict baseless conspiracy theories and lies about the integrity of our elections. Not only do these lies and conspiracy theories undermine public faith in our democracy and elections, they cost taxpayer dollars.

Since the 2020 election, in the county where I live, we have seen multiple baseless lawsuits filed seeking to overturn or audit election results. None of them have produced evidence of misconduct or inaccurate results. What they have done is cost taxpayer dollars in legal fees, court resources, and time and effort by county employees and election officials that have to be diverted to defending these groundless suits.

I am proud of the professional administrators and volunteers who work so diligently every election to safeguard our democracy and make it work, but it is also important that leaders from across the political spectrum step up and stand up for our democratic processes and call out those who are trying to undermine them, as well as call out those who are wasting taxpayer dollars.

#### SABINO HIGH SCHOOL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

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

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Sabino High

School football team, who recently won the Arizona's 3A Division State Championship defeating their opponent 68-46.

This win holds special significance in my district because this is the first time in 8 years that a Tucson-area high school clinched the football State title.

I also recognize Head Coach Ryan McBrayer and his staff. Coach McBrayer has a record of 57 wins and only 19 losses throughout his coaching career. This title is a testament to the dedication of the players and the coaches, an incredible accomplishment they won't soon forget.

I am confident that the lessons of determination, teamwork, and perseverance will stay with these young players for a lifetime.

Congratulations again to the Sabino Sabercats for their successful 2023 season. This victory is a true reflection that hard work does pay off.

#### HONORING DEBI AND MARK HALL FOR ADVOCATING AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor the remarkable efforts of Debi and Mark Hall for their activism and their fight against Alzheimer's disease.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of sitting down and speaking with the Halls, as well as participating in this year's Walk to End Alzheimer's.

Debi, who spent 40 years as a nurse, was diagnosed with this devastating disease at the age of 65 in 2020. Her diagnosis spurred the couple's mission to raise money and support efforts to find a cure for Alzheimer's.

Now, they are known as tireless advocates in the fight to raise awareness, find a cure, and support those who suffer from Alzheimer's and their loved ones.

I have to tell you, I have been around Debi and Mark a few times, and their love and support for each other is unmatched. It is lovely to see the way they look at each other, support each other, and, yes, even dance with each other. It is something amazing to see.

Our community and the fight against Alzheimer's are stronger because of the work of the Halls in Southern Arizona.

As we conclude Alzheimer's Awareness Month, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to them for the dedication and compassion that they bring to Arizona's Sixth Congressional District.

#### REMEMBERING AND HONORING THE LIFE OF FREDDY ORTIZ

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and honor the life of Freddy Ortiz, a devoted CBP agent who tragically lost his life in the line of duty.

On November 13, Agent Ortiz was responding to reports of illegal border activity when he was involved in a fatal ATV crash in Douglas, Arizona.

Agent Ortiz dedicated his life to service to our country, serving in the U.S. Navy before spending the last 13 years in CBP.

The loss of Freddy Ortiz underscores a harsh reality: Our law enforcement and Border Patrol put their lives on the line every day when they wake up and put on their uniforms.

As we gather with family and friends this holiday season, I encourage you all to remember families like the Ortizes who will be missing a loved one at their table because he made the ultimate sacrifice.

Freddy's service, sacrifice, and legacy will never be forgotten. It will never be forgotten.

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#### REMEMBERING SAUNDRA GRAHAM

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

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember three generational leaders who have earned the honor of being eulogized in this great Chamber and in perpetuity in our CONGRESSIONAL RECORD: Saundra Graham, Pearline James, and Mukiya Baker-Gomez, three incredible Black women whose love for community was manifest in their historic achievements and legacy they invite us all to aspire to.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the passing of Ms. Saundra Graham. Saundra Graham's contributions to Cambridge and the Commonwealth far outpace her impressive and well-earned list of titles: first woman of color elected to the Cambridge City Council, the first woman of color to be the vice mayor, six-term State representative, secretary to the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, founder of the Massachusetts Childcare Coalition, co-founder of the Riverside Cambridgeport Community Development Corporation, among others.

Saundra Graham truly was a trailblazer on a mission to do good along the way, and she wasn't afraid to make good trouble in the name of justice both inside and outside of politics.

She was a tenacious truth-teller, and I count myself amongst those who will miss her righteous reprimands. Her impact is an indelible one which will endure throughout our Commonwealth and in her loving family, which I know was her greatest legacy as she was a proud mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great-grandmother.

May she rest in peace and power.

#### PAYING TRIBUTE TO PEARLINE JAMES

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an incredible woman of faith, Pearline James. In church, I grew up singing a song, "They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love." Indeed, Mrs. James was God's love in action.

Pastor Pearline James served God and her community as an associate pastor at Full Life Gospel Center in Dorchester. She did this with love, dedication, and compassion for all God's children.

It is no surprise, as one of 21 siblings and the second eldest, that she was a mother and nurturer to many. She brought life and love to every child and family that passed through her and her beloved husband Evans' childcare center in their home, J.P. Family Childcare, in the 1970s. She was passionate about education, and at the age of 60, she returned to school, earning a degree and graduating with a 3.8 GPA.

While Mrs. James laid in hospice, the true impact of the love she imparted to the city was on full display, and nurses were quoted saying she had no less than 300 visitors.

Her daughter Denella said her mother often would invoke the lyrics of "It Is Well With My Soul," a gospel hymn whose words include: "Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul."

She is survived by the great love of her life, Evan, by her daughters, Denella, Rosemarie, and Debby, and 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

HONORING MUKIYA BAKER-GOMEZ

Ms. PRESSLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a woman, leader, mentor, and brilliant strategist on whose shoulders so many electoral firsts stand on, including myself, Mukiya Baker-Gomez.

In 2018, I became the first person of color to represent the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the House of Representatives in the Commonwealth's 230-year history. That foundation, that possibility, the literal electoral blueprint to winning elections in Boston and building coalitions, began with Mukiya Baker-Gomez. Her political acumen and shrewd counsel were enviable, and her commitment to community unwavering and unshakeable, especially to Black people.

Her every move and impact outside of politics has been even greater. She played a key role in an inclusive economy, fighting to ensure that contractors of color would be prioritized. She was a historymaker, although she never chased a title.

It was important to me to eulogize her because I will not have her contributions erased or unacknowledged.

I thank Mukiya for everything. I love and miss her.

She is survived by the love of her life, Kevin; her loving children, Talisha and Kenyatta; her siblings; and a host of family by blood and by bond.

I thank Mukiya for her sacrifice and tenacity and for always speaking truth to power.

#### STANDING STRONG IN SUPPORT OF JAPAN

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of New York. Mr. Speaker, for over 70 years, the United States and Japan have been bound together by a steadfast and loyal alli-

ance. Our nations have come together in decades of peace and cooperation.

Today, however, our Japanese allies are facing mounting threats. China is ramping up its expansionist efforts, and the tyrannical regime of North Korea continues to develop its arsenal of nuclear weapons and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, which pose a direct threat to the civilian population of Japan.

In this increasingly unstable and bellicose environment, it has never been more important for the United States to stand strong in support of Japan.

North Korea, in particular, is guilty of grave human rights abuses against Japanese citizens. Since the 1970s, North Korea has covertly abducted 17 Japanese citizens from the homeland islands, some while they slept in their beds. In addition to these 17 officially recognized abductees, there are numerous other cases of missing Japanese citizens for whom the possibility of having been abducted and taken to North Korea simply can't be ruled out. The agony of not knowing haunts these families, and the fear of abductions in the night from the sea has haunted coastal communities in Japan for decades.

Every single one of these abductions is a horrific tragedy that has caused untold suffering. Perhaps even more disturbing is North Korea's heartless and transparent deception concerning the status of these victims. For example, while North Korea claims eight of these abductees have died from causes like suicide, heart attacks, and traffic accidents inside North Korea, the regime has never produced any objectively verifiable evidence of their deaths to the families who just want to know.

The North Koreans have conveniently claimed that the remains of some of the abductees were washed away in floods. They have even handed over alleged abductee remains to Japan only for the DNA testing to later show that these alleged remains do not match the identities of the abducted victims. It is unimaginably cruel.

North Korea's treatment of Japan and its citizens is nothing short of evil and an inhuman crime. America doesn't allow its allies to be bullied. That is why I introduced H. Res. 620, a resolution that seeks to carry out justice for the Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea. This resolution accomplishes three major goals.

First, it provides official congressional recognition of the horrific abductions of Japanese citizens by the North Koreans. This includes an acknowledgment that North Korea has violated the basic human rights of these Japanese citizens and that only 5 of the 17 officially recognized abductees have been returned to Japan.

Second, this resolution urges North Korea to take action on rectifying these abuses. It calls upon North Korea to release all foreign abducted nationals, including those from Japan. It also

urges North Korea to return the remains of all deceased abductees, provide information about their demise, and make reparations for these crimes.

Lastly, the resolution reaffirms Congress' commitment to our alliance with Japan and to American strength abroad. When America is weak, our enemies are empowered; our allies are endangered; and our national security is put at risk. When America is strong, we hold our enemies accountable for their actions; we defend our allies; and we keep our country safe.

The alliance with Japan is the bedrock of America's influence in Asia and our security. Strong and unapologetic support for Japan is an essential component of American foreign policy. We in Congress must all speak as one and stand with Japan. We will not let such a faithful and crucial ally be pushed around by a tyrannical and rogue regime.

I am incredibly proud to introduce this resolution. I thank Congresswoman TOKUDA for co-leading this bipartisan effort.

Stop for a moment and remember the suffering of these families who have had their family members taken from them without any knowledge of their well-being.

#### HISTORY OF CIVIL RIGHTS ABUSES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUARTE). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to introduce my first piece of legislation, the JUST Act.

When the United States Department of Agriculture was established by President Lincoln in 1862, it reflected a recognition of the strategic importance of agriculture in the Nation's development. It aimed to address the needs of farmers, promote scientific advancements in agriculture, and contribute to rural development. However, racism perpetuated by the rules and the laws of Jim Crow remained strong.

This was in the early years of the Civil War. Sixty-one years later, we remember in 1923 the massacre, the removal of Black, prosperous farmers in Rosewood, Florida, where Black farmers were taken off of their land.

In the 1920s, 30 percent of America's families lived in rural America on farmlands. The USDA was created to provide a safety net for America's farmers, ranchers, and growers, which included assistance for struggling industries, disaster assistance, crop insurance, technical assistance, access to credit, and help for producers to implement conservation practices.

For decades, the USDA has had an unfortunate and checkered history regarding civil rights, manifesting most notably in discriminatory lending practices, unequal program access, civil rights violations, land loss, and