

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the Federal Railroad Administration's selection of the Cleveland-Sandusky-Toledo-Detroit corridor for a critical passenger rail grant. What a congested corridor it is.

This Federal funding is but the first step toward expanding passenger rail in northern Ohio, which has long suffered from underinvestment in rail infrastructure.

To this day, our region continues to lag daytime passenger service due to congested rail service on the same tracks.

Improving the connection to Detroit will also bolster our region's already strong ties with our Michigan and Canadian neighbors on the other side of the Great Lake we share, Lake Erie.

Still, there is so much more to be done. We must find ways to advance passenger rail improvements in the Cleveland-Toledo to Chicago corridor, which despite the tireless efforts of Grace Gallucci and others at the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, was not awarded Federal planning funds.

For our neglected region to be excellent at this planning opportunity for efficient passenger rail in view of freight congestion, Federal funding is needed to establish a transportation planning center of expertise in northwest Ohio.

Let's not have any more East Palestine or Sandusky accidents. We need real rail planning in our region.

CONDEMNING HAMAS

(Mrs. KIM of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, 2 months ago on October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked attack on Israel, killing 1,200 Israelis, subjecting women to barbaric sexual violence, taking hostages, and upending the lives of so many innocent civilians. These attacks are abhorrent.

The images, videos, and stories of the victims have rocked the world and impacted each of us. We must be unequivocal in condemning Hamas.

That is why I led 87 colleagues in a bipartisan letter to U.N. Women after they still have not publicly condemned Hamas for these attacks and sexual violence against women.

They have since reversed course, but their silence for nearly 2 months leaves a stain on their mission as a leader on women's issues.

I will keep working to hold the Iranian regime accountable for their backing of Hamas terrorists behind these attacks, and I stand with Israel and our Jewish community always.

□ 1115

FOUR LEGISLATIVE DAYS LEFT

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, there are 4 legislative days left in 2023.

Yesterday, I spoke from the well about the need to provide critical aid to Ukraine and Israel—just as I did the week before, just as I did the month before, just as I will continue to do until we act.

All Congress has to show for it is a failed vote in the Senate yesterday.

Representative DUSTY JOHNSON recently said that there is “a strong majority of lawmakers in both the House and the Senate that understand this world is a lot more dangerous when America recedes from leadership. Clearly, we want to help our allies like Israel and Ukraine.”

The Speaker should heed the words of his Republican colleague. He refuses to give us a clean vote. The world becomes more dangerous. It must stop.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue until we act.

There are 300 votes on this floor for Ukraine and over 400 votes for Israel, yet we are unable to vote. That is a shame for our country.

CONGRATULATING DEVIN JOHNSON, PLANT CITY FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

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

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Plant City Fire Rescue's Firefighter of the Year, Devin Johnson.

Mr. Johnson has the true heart of a public servant and has selflessly served our Plant City community for the past 5 years as a paramedic and firefighter.

In 2021, Mr. Johnson completed the necessary certification to become a standalone paramedic and provide the highest level of lifesaving care to our community.

This year alone, Mr. Johnson has provided over 1,000 hours as a field training officer in the paramedic internship program, leading and guiding students to better their community. He has also worked more than 500 hours of overtime to keep the fire rescue running operationally.

Mr. Johnson's Plant City Fire Rescue colleagues recognized him for his hard work, reliability, expertise, and continued dedication to the department and to our community.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Firefighter Johnson, and I thank him for his service to our community.

AWARDING MARSHALL “MAJOR” TAYLOR WITH A CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

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

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to introduce the bipar-

tisan Marshall “Major” Taylor Congressional Gold Medal Act, the highest honor this body can bestow upon an American.

Major Taylor was the greatest athlete of his era, America's first sports superstar, and a world champion, but he has been left out of our history books. We need to bring him out of the shadows and recognize his greatness both on and off the track.

Not only did Taylor set world records and dominate his sport, but he did so while facing down racists and bigots in the Jim Crow era.

Race organizers would try to exclude him from events. Other cyclists would viciously insult him and even did physical harm.

Despite it all, the son of a Union soldier rose above it, setting record after record and becoming a world champion.

Even when compared to today's athletes, Major Taylor is among the greatest cyclists of all time. It is time that Congress recognizes his greatness and award him a Congressional Gold Medal.

MARKING 82ND ANNIVERSARY OF PEARL HARBOR

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, today, as you know, marks the 82nd anniversary of the dirty attack on Pearl Harbor, where the U.S. was thrown into war by the Imperial Japanese military.

Indeed, we should never ever forget, and we should always have vigilance and readiness.

At the time right now when our world is in great peril, I worry about the readiness we have in order to do what we need to do to protect ourselves and those allies we care about.

Some of my best memories are with some of the people I knew who were involved in Pearl Harbor, such as my dear friend, Mel Fisher, and his wife, Cathy, on the 69th, when I was able to attend Pearl Harbor ceremonies with them on the USS *Arizona*. That was a great moment for me to be involved. I also think of a great patriot, over 100 years old and still living in Grass Valley, California, my good friend, Lou Conter, the last surviving member of the USS *Arizona*.

I think of people like that, and I think of these brave folks who stand in the gap for us and for our country on this day. We should honor them as we honor them every day, by being good citizens for freedom in this country.

RACISM IN AMERICA

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise, and still I rise.

I rise today, as always, when I address persons in this most sacred place in my heart. I rise as a proud American. I am proud to say that I am an American. I am proud to say that I am American because my foreparents made it what it is. Its greatness can be traced back to 240 years of free labor, free sacrifice, and I am proud.

I wear this tie indicating that I am proud. I salute the flag. I say the Pledge of Allegiance. I sing the national anthem.

I am proud to be an American, and why wouldn't I be proud, given that my foreparents made it great. The greatness of America resides today on the economic foundations laid by persons of African ancestry. They are the economic foundational mothers and fathers of this country.

Now, there are some who say to me, literally: How can you be proud, AL GREEN, when your foreparents were put into chains, when they were beaten, when women were raped, when they were born into slavery and lived their lives as slaves? How can you be proud?

I can be proud because I have the power to forgive, the power to forgive for all of these transgressions. God has given me this power. I would hope that others could acquire the power to forgive. The power to forgive is the power that will allow you to go on to do other things.

God did not give me, however, the power to forget. Forgive and forget is not a sensible statement of where the heart and mind should be, in my opinion. It is forgive and remember. Forgive all the transgressions, but remember that they occurred. This is why we can say "never again" as it relates to certain transgressions.

So, I forgive, and I love the country, but I don't forget.

Today, I want to talk about my foreparents. This is a depiction of when they may have arrived, on August 20, 1619. I want to talk about them, and I want to talk about the racism in America today.

As we discuss racism in America today, we have to first identify the reasons why Africans were enslaved, the reasons why America enslaved Africans, to be more specific.

Remember, I am the guy who is forgiving. I am the guy who loves the country, sings the national anthem, but he doesn't forget.

Why did America enslave Africans? Here is why: To be a permanent—I think 240 years of enslavement is a pretty good representation of the fact that there was an intentionality that it be permanent—to be a permanent, identifiable—"identifiable," easily recognized among the population; "permanent," 240 years of enslavement; "identifiable," the complexion of skin as a methodology by which one could be immediately identified and put in his proper place or her proper place, their proper place.

Permanent, identifiable, powerless.

There was never the desire to have persons of African ancestry become

powerful in this country. It was not there. I am talking about at the genesis of this on August 20, 1619, when they were first introduced into the Colonies. There was slavery in the country prior to this, but we are talking about when it was introduced into the Colonies.

Africans were brought here to be a permanent, identifiable, powerless—no power. The courts in this country actually recognized the fact that we were powerless. In *Dred Scott*, the Chief Justice indicated that persons of African ancestry had no rights that a White person had to respect. It was not said in those exact words, but that is the exact meaning. They had no rights.

Permanent, identifiable, powerless, subservient.

They were brought here to be servants—not just servants in the sense of people who were to do the bidding of others but to do so with a degree and a demeanor of servility. They had to be servile—servile.

Africans were brought here to be a permanent, identifiable, powerless, subservient caste—not class; there is a distinction. Class has to do with a socioeconomic identification. Caste has to do with a hereditary identification, meaning if you were born into this caste, this group, you were to be a slave. You were enslaved by birth.

By definition, at birth, you were enslaved. You were permanently enslaved. You were identifiably enslaved. You were powerless as a slave. You were subservient as a slave and forever a slave as long as you lived.

These are the reasons why America enslaved Africans to be a permanent, identifiable, powerless, subservient caste of people.

To this day, much of this still exists. To this day, there are still people who treat persons of African ancestry as though they are still powerless and should be subservient and belong to this caste.

When Dr. King went to India on his pilgrimage, he was introduced at a certain venue. When he was introduced, it was said to him that he was part of a caste. Initially, he didn't really, in my opinion, know exactly how to respond to this because he had not been told that he was a part of a caste. After giving some thought to it, he realized that, to a certain extent, there was this caste system.

To this day, there is still evidence of people who believe that we should be powerless. Let's examine that. Obviously, we are still identifiable, but that we should still be powerless.

□ 1130

We still have problems accessing the capital that allows one to succeed in society. We have evidence, empirical evidence, indicating, evidencing, the fact that persons of African ancestry, who are imminently qualified, can apply for a loan and they will pay higher points for that loan, they will receive less sometimes than what they

need, and they will pay a higher interest rate than an Anglo who is less qualified.

Empirical evidence. I sit on the Financial Services Committee. We have looked into these things. The empirical evidence exists. Still a desire, but powerless.

Now, some people will say, are you saying that there is a conspiracy? I don't think anybody had a grand meeting and decided we will just continue this caste system by making sure they remain powerless in society. I don't think that happened. I think it has been inculcated into the culture. The 240 years of slavery, thereafter followed with Black codes, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, thereafter followed with lawful and legal segregation.

There was lawful and legal segregation until 1954, the *Brown* case. It hasn't been that long ago. In my lifetime, I suffered lawful, legal segregation. Thank God I have the power to forgive.

Powerless, intentionality, powerless, in the culture. It is not going to be eradicated overnight. One court decision will not eliminate 240 years of slavery plus an additional great number of years of lawful segregation. It doesn't eliminate it.

Many of the people who suffer from this affliction, they don't know it in the sense that they purposefully do these things, but they happen. There was 240 years of slavery, thereafter followed with lawful segregation, and now we still suffer as powerless people.

I am going to say more about powerless, but I want to just remind persons that we still are born Black in America, still have the identifiable complexion. There are still people who expect us to be subservient, to be more respectful than others.

I have seen it myself wherein an Anglo person can say to a police officer that he or she or they happen to think is doing something inappropriate: "Who do you think you are? Give me your badge number. I am going to report you." The officer accepts it. If an African American says: "Who are you? Who do you think you are?" It is unacceptable. There is a belief that you cannot challenge the system to the same extent as Anglos, all emanating from the permanent, identifiable, powerless, subservient caste.

Now, let's give a supreme, superb example of being powerless. I think this example will speak in ways that many of us have not given consideration to. I regret to have to bring this example to the attention of the House of Representatives, to the attention of the country, to the attention of the Senate, but here is the example.

This building is the Russell Senate Office Building. This building is a symbol of national shame, the Russell Senate Office Building. Taxpayer dollars built it. Taxpayer dollars maintain it. Every taxpayer in this country has a stake in the Russell Senate Office Building, and it is a symbol of national shame.

I am talking about racism in America now, how we learn to tolerate it. Remember this: Those who tolerate racism perpetuate racism.

Let's talk about the Russell Senate Office Building, named in honor of a self-proclaimed white supremacist. This is brother Richard Russell, Senator. I refer to every man as my brother. If not my brother, according to the notable anthropologist, paleontologist, L.S.B. Leakey, we are probably cousins. We are probably related in some way.

This is Mr. Richard Russell. Mr. Richard Russell is prominently displayed in this building. When you enter this building, you enter into a rotunda. This is where Mr. Richard Russell is prominently displayed in the Russell Senate Office Building.

You will note at the top, we have styled this, we have captioned it, "self-proclaimed white supremacist." This is Mr. Richard Russell, self-proclaimed white supremacist.

This building is named in honor of Mr. Richard Russell, this man, the self-proclaimed white supremacist. He stands there today in the rotunda of the Richard Russell Office Building.

Now, why would I make an issue of this for you in talking about racism and enslavement? Well, here is why. Powerless. Remember, powerless. This is the building.

Powerless. We, the people of African ancestry, are powerless to remove this man's statue and to remove his name from a building we support. We are powerless. We can't get it done.

The Senate knows that Richard Russell was a bigot and a racist. They probably see him more as a racist than as a bigot, but he was the person who fought antilynching legislation. He is the person who fought civil rights legislation. He is the person who coauthored the "Southern Manifesto," and he is the person who stands in the rotunda all to himself in the Russell Senate Office Building.

Yes, we have asked that his name be removed from the building and that his statue be removed. Just as the Senate has removed names from military bases, the Congress has, the House and Senate, the Senate can remove that name of Richard Russell. This is Richard Russell standing in his place of grandeur.

There is more to be said about this. I would now like you to see a different view of the Russell statue. Your perch can sometimes influence what you see. I have shown you Mr. Russell up close. Now let's step back and take a look.

Here is Mr. Russell. He is standing here. By the way, I respect and I say "Mr. Russell." There are people who would demean me for saying "Mr. Russell." He was a former United States Senator. He was a bigot and a racist, but I still give him respect.

Here is Mr. Russell. Now, let's put this here for just a moment. There is Mr. Russell. He is here. I hope the camera can pick him up.

Here is what you cannot identify that I have to identify for you. Above Mr. Russell, in the Russell Senate Office Building, above Mr. Russell, in these various spaces along this area in the Russell Senate Office Building, are news outlets, major news outlets. CNN is there. MSNBC is there. Major news outlets occupy the space above Mr. Richard Russell.

Who can deny that they are aware that they are sharing space with a self-proclaimed white supremacist? Have they no shame? CNN, have you no shame? You fight against hate, and you house yourself above Richard Russell. Have you no shame, MSNBC? Have you no shame?

The man's name shouldn't be on the building. His statue shouldn't be on the building, and you ought not be housed above it. The Richard Russell Office Building, with Senator Russell in all of his glory, above his head, notable news sources reporting the news, not reporting that Richard Russell is right beneath them, the racist.

Remember now, those who tolerate racism perpetuate racism. All of these news sources I just mentioned—FOX is there, too. All of them, they are there. If one of them that I have called is not there, let me know. I don't go over there. I haven't been over there. I am a one-person protest. I don't go in the building. I respect myself too much to go there. I have dignity. I have respect for myself. I am a sinner, but I am not that much of a sinner.

Those who tolerate this perpetuate it. Those who tolerate this statue being there perpetuate it. I am saying it. CNN is perpetuating racism. MSNBC, you are perpetuating racism. FOX, you are perpetuating racism. I am saying it. I know that I am powerless to do anything to you about it. You can stay there as long as you desire, never report it, and it becomes a nonissue. You can stay there, and the world will remain as it is. There will just be one Member of Congress who came to the floor of the House of Representatives and had the courage to call you out.

I know you won't get any airtime on CNN or MSNBC or FOX. You can't challenge the news media and tell them where they are wrong and expect them to allow you to be heard. It doesn't work that way in this country and probably in very few countries in the world. You can't do it. I understand that.

I understand that I am powerless, but I also understand that I can take a stand. I also understand that I can point out to people that yes, you can challenge power. Yes, you can be that person who speaks truth to power. Yes, you can do it. Here is what is even more important than to speaking truth to power; that is speaking truth about power.

You see, to speak truth to power, you simply say: Power, we have a problem, and we need to solve it.

□ 1145

When you speak truth about power, you say: Power, CNN, MSNBC, FOX, we

have a problem, and you are part of it. They are part of the problem. There are others up there with them, but they are part of the problem.

Richard Russell, a self-proclaimed white supremacist, in a rotunda all to himself. I know of no other rotunda that has a single person in it—if there may be one. There you are housing yourselves above him.

If I am wrong, let me know I am wrong and I will come back to this very podium and I will extend an apology. I will do it. When you are wrong, that is what you do. I will come back and I will extend an apology.

I ask you, CNN, I ask you, MSNBC, I ask you, FOX, tell me I am wrong that you are not reporting from above Richard Russell.

I am talking about racism in America. I am talking about those who tolerate it and perpetuate it. I am now going to talk about solutions. There are many solutions. Please don't take this as all inclusive, but this is a necessary solution. A necessary solution to, as a matter of necessity, deal with how this has been inculcated into society such that these prominent news sources would tolerate this.

There are some things that have to be done. They could be very beneficial in getting it done. If they are tolerating this, I don't know to what extent we can count on them. Here is what we have to do. One of the things we have to do is acknowledge the conscience agenda.

Let me remove Mr. Russell for a moment. He still maintains his place of honor in the Senate, but not here while I am talking. Now, we have to acknowledge this conscience agenda.

Conscience agenda, our moral imperative. Here is what we have to do. We have to acknowledge slavery and the horrors of it, but also set aside a day. By the way, I am not asking for a holiday with people being paid and off from work. I don't want that. I don't think that we should have that for something as important as this.

I don't want it to become something where people are going to have a mattress sale and talk about how you can get a great discount. Slavery Remembrance Day discount, come on in and get your mattress. I don't want that.

I want people to understand that August 20, annually, ought to be Slavery Remembrance Day. I thank God that at least one prominent person has acknowledged it, and there are others that I will mention briefly. Perhaps I will reverse the order and do it this way.

Mr. STENY HOYER helped me to get legislation through the House recognizing Slavery Remembrance Day. I thank Mr. HOYER and I will never let history write him out. I thank him for what he did. Slavery Remembrance Day is important.

We have Juneteenth. Yes, Juneteenth is about celebrating freedom, when General Gordon Granger came into Galveston, Texas, and read "General

Order No. 3." That is worthy of celebrating; this is about commemoration, not celebration. This is about commemorating those lives that suffered for some 240 years to make America great. There were 240 years of suffering. They were born into it, into a caste system.

They were born into it. Babies were slaves. Enslaved people is a more appropriate way to say it. Babies were enslaved human beings that grew up to become enslaved adolescents. They went on to become enslaved adults and thereafter died as enslaved human beings. Lives devoted to making America great.

No emolument has been accorded them. No recompense has been accorded them. No consideration other than they had the necessities to remain alive so that they could continue to be enslaved persons who could produce a work product. We should honor this day.

I am proud of Senator ELIZABETH WARREN who has helped to get this done, and she is working on the Senate to get the resolution through the Senate. The same Senate, by the way, that won't remove Richard Russell's name from the Russell Senate Office Building. That is the same Senate that won't remove his statue from the rotunda that he happens to enjoy all to himself.

We have to have Slavery Remembrance Day. We should honor these economic foundational mothers and fathers on whose sacrifice America has become the great Nation that it is. They built the Capitol. Yes, these folks, their hands helped to construct the very Capitol that we have here. They helped to construct the White House. They built the roads and the bridges. They planted the seeds and harvested the crops to feed the Nation. Yet, they are not properly recognized.

In fact, this Congress did something that demeaned them. Here is what the Congress did in 1956. The Congress of the United States of America, the country I love, land of the free and home of the brave, the Congress of the United States of America awarded Congressional Gold Medals to the enslavers. They awarded Congressional Gold Medals to Confederate soldiers. They awarded nothing to the people whose hands helped build the Capitol. Nothing to them. But awarded the enslavers, the persons who fought to maintain slavery.

Remember, we had to go to war. Thank God for Abraham Lincoln. We had to go to war to deal with slavery. People died. What a tragedy it was. But that is what it took to eliminate slavery in this country. We gave a Congressional Gold Medal to the Confederates, and nothing to the persons who were enslaved.

Well, we can remedy that. Remember now, I am talking about things we need to do to change the mindset that we have. We need, and I think this Congress should, award a Congressional

Gold Medal to the enslaved. That seems so easy to comprehend, but yet so hard for this Congress to do.

They just need to acknowledge that these folks who suffered for 240 years, they ought to be acknowledged for what they did too. They ought to be acknowledged for what they did here, for what they did with the White House, and for what they did for this country—a Congressional Gold Medal for the enslaved.

There is a resolution pending for such a thing to be done. Remember, powerless. Powerless. We are shown to be powerless when something as simple as this can't be done. Something as simple as having a Slavery Remembrance Day where the Congress, meaning the House and the Senate and the President, acknowledges it.

We have a Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. We have a 9/11 Remembrance. We have a Holocaust Remembrance Day, meaning the President, the House, and the Senate recognizes Holocaust Remembrance Day. We don't have such a thing for the people who are the economic foundational mothers and fathers of this country. No slavery remembrance. Don't have it. That is because we are still powerless.

We have some power. Yes, we are Senators and we are in Congress and we have a President and there is a Vice President, but we are still shown that we cannot demand justice and get justice. There are people who would say: You are not asking for it properly. You have to be subservient. Be servile and maybe you can get it then.

We can't demand it and get it. I demand it. We ought to have Slavery Remembrance Day acknowledged by the House, the Senate, and the President, as well as a Congressional Gold Medal accorded the enslaved.

I have talked about it; we need to remove Richard Russell's name from the Russell Senate Office Building. I won't go into any great details in explaining that, I have gone through it clearly. There is legislation for atonement that is pending, and I won't go through that.

I do want to go to the last item on my agenda, which is number five.

Mr. Speaker, so I may govern myself accordingly, can you please tell me how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 26 minutes remaining.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk now about the thing that I think will help not only with slavery remembrance, but also will help us with other issues that have not been resolved. That is the establishment of a department of reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, we have not reconciled. We have not. There are chasms that we cannot see but that we can experience. We need to span the chasms that divide us. To do so, we need to have a methodology by which it can be accomplished. To have that methodology, we have to have a means in place. This would be the means by which the methodology

could be enforced and put into motion so that we can get reconciliation.

Reconciliation. There ought to be in this country what we could not do after the war because President Johnson was more interested in the antebellum aspect of the war. He would have gone back if he could have, but he could only go so far. He did limit forward movement, so we didn't get reconciliation.

We need a department of reconciliation with a secretary of reconciliation. A person that wakes up every morning with the mission of helping us to reconcile the differences in a very positive way, I might add—the differences that separate us, the chasms that we failed to span over the centuries.

Remember, slavery lasted for more than two centuries, it wasn't a 20-year event. That is why some of the aspects of the powerlessness are still inculcated into our society. We need this department of reconciliation with a secretary and under secretaries of reconciliation to deal with all of the invidious discrimination that has not been resolved. There are issues related to other persons that have not been resolved.

□ 1200

One example would be the indigenous Americans. They are the first Americans. Their issues have not been resolved. These are the folk who suffered the Trail of Tears. These are the folk who suffered wars against them, and they were made the villains. They were defending their land, and they are the villains.

We need to resolve this. The department of reconciliation would help us do this. It won't be done in a month, a week, a year or 2, or a decade. It is going to take time. Nevertheless, it is not going to be done without some structure. It is not going to be done with just the passage of time. It won't happen.

Dr. King reminded us that it is not the passage of time that makes change—these are not his exact words—but rather what you do with time as it passes.

What do you do with the time? If you don't make good use of it, then the change won't take place.

So, we need this department of reconciliation; we need a secretary of reconciliation; we need under secretaries of reconciliation; and we need a budget. I have proposed that the budget for this department be indexed and tied to, if you will, indexed and tied to the Defense Department's budget.

Why the Defense Department's budget? It is because we will always fund the Defense Department. I think that we should have a budget that is indexed and tied to it. The money would not come out of the Defense Department's budget.

There would be money that would be the equivalent of some percentage, say 10 percent, of what is in the Defense

Department for the department of reconciliation so that we can at some point, at some point, span the chasms that divide, separate, and prevent us from having the level of unity within our country that we richly deserve given the great documents, the great founding documents, of the country, that all persons are created equal, endowed by the creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These certain documents include the pledge of liberty and justice for all.

We need to do these things. I am committed to Slavery Remembrance Day. I am committed. I stand alone sometimes with this commitment. It is an idea that I brought to this Congress, and I am going to stay with it.

Yes, I am the progenitor, the progenitor, of Slavery Remembrance Day. I am going to stay with it. I am not letting it go.

The Congressional Gold Medal for the enslaved, I will not let it go.

Removing Mr. Russell's name, I will not let it go.

Establishing a department of reconciliation, I won't let it go.

The question is: Will others find it within their hearts and their spirits to take a similar stance? I pray that they will.

I close with this, Mr. Speaker: We persons of African ancestry have suffered, our ancestors have and are still suffering, from the indignation and humiliation associated with slavery and segregation. We are still suffering from it. We are still suffering from racism.

There are people who would say: Forget the racism.

I am not going to forget it, just like I would not want my Jewish brothers and sisters to forget the Holocaust. Don't forget the Holocaust, and I won't forget slavery.

We are still suffering, and we are suffering because of what I indicated initially.

Why were we brought to this country? When I say "we," I am talking about my foreparents. Why were they brought to this country? They were brought here to be: permanent, remember, 240 years of slavery is evidence of it, centuries; identifiable, they wanted people of color because they could spot them easily; powerless, no power, not recognized, the law recognizes no rights for you as they relate to persons who are Anglo; subservient, always servile, always humble, always ready to serve, pleading with the master, "Give me something that I may do for you, master"; and caste, the difference between caste and class, remember, class is a socioeconomic condition. Caste is usually hereditary. You are born into it, you live it, and you die.

We are still suffering from this original reason that enslaved persons were brought to this country. Nevertheless, I believe that we can bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice for African Americans and all other persons who suffer from invidious discrimination.

I believe it. I believe we can achieve it. I just know that we have to work hard to get it done.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the time. I am proud to have stood here, and I proudly move forward with the conscience agenda that I have called to the attention of our country. God bless you, Mr. Speaker, and God bless the United States of America.

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

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

HONORING THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF ALLISON GETZ

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

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the extraordinary life of one Allison Getz, who was a friend, a public servant, and a true Texan who has left a tremendous mark on southeast Texas.

Allison's public service wasn't just a job, Mr. Speaker. It was a calling. From chairing events like the Spindletop Ball to leading organizations such as the Symphony League, Temple Emanuel, and the Fire Museum of Texas, she demonstrated a deep commitment to the betterment of our community.

For the last 9 years, she served as Jefferson County tax assessor-collector. Her innovation and modernization efforts as tax assessor earned her the prestigious title of Tax Assessor of the Year for the entire State of Texas in 2021, and that is no easy task.

I speak for southeast Texas, Mr. Speaker. We are forever indebted to Allison's tireless devotion and dedication. Allison had always said three things when she talked with anyone. She said, "How can I help? Is there anything you need?" and she always finished with, "I appreciate you."

She was known for her huge heart, her love for her husband, Mike, her parents, children, grandchildren, and, most of all, southeast Texas.

Brenda and I were deeply saddened to learn about her passing on October 10, 2023. Our prayers are with her family during this very difficult time.

As we bid farewell to this remarkable public servant, let's remember Allison Julia Getz with a great deal of gratitude. May her legacy continue to inspire us to continue the work of service and compassion she so fervently championed.

We are grateful for Allison's dedication to community. We will miss her. She will never be forgotten and will always be in our hearts.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JOSEPH "JOE" RUTA

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to honor the life and legacy of

one Joseph "Joe" Ruta, who passed away on October 14, 2023, at the age of 96.

Joe Ruta was born on February 25, 1927. He was one of the dwindling members of the Greatest Generation. Like so many others of his time, he actually lied about his age to join the Army during World War II. Joe served in Germany as an ambulance driver at Dachau concentration camp, where he saw firsthand the horrors of the Holocaust.

Upon returning home, he married Victoria Damico and became a truck driver. Vicky and Joe were married for 75 years, Mr. Speaker, having two children, six grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. One of those grandchildren is my chief of staff, Jeanette Whitener. She is a jewel.

Joe was an avid card player, enjoyed doing puzzles, and especially enjoyed time spent with his family. He was an amazing husband and an amazing father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He served this country and his family with pride, generosity, and devotion.

Joe will be missed by his family and everyone who knew him. Another from the Greatest Generation is now gone.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF WILLIAM "BILL" BIGGS

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life and legacy of William "Bill" Ambrose Biggs III, who passed away on November 16, 2023.

Bill Biggs was born in Abilene, Texas, on February 19, 1937. At the age of 11, he and his family, Mr. Speaker, moved to Austin, Texas, where his local adventures would make Tom Sawyer green with envy.

Bill graduated from Austin High School in 1955 and went directly to the University of Texas, where he graduated with a degree in chemistry in the year 1959. He also earned his MBA from Texas in 1961.

Following graduation, Bill went on Active Duty in the United States Army in 1962. During his military career, he earned his Ranger Tab, graduated from the Army War College, and rose to the rank of colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve before retiring in 1988. His final commendation was the Legion of Merit.

Perpetually in motion, after the Army and retiring from his successful business in Pennsylvania, Bill returned to school, earned his J.D., juris doctor, from the St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio, and graduated in 2020.

He was a tremendous husband, father, grandfather, brother, son, entrepreneur, citizen, soldier, and devoted Texas Longhorn. Bill will be sorely missed by his family and all who knew him.

BIDDING FAREWELL TO BOB HARVEY

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bid farewell to a true titan of Texas, a man whose dedication has left an indelible mark on the landscape of the greater Houston region, Bob Harvey, the president and CEO of the Greater Houston Partnership.