

Executive Order 14059 of December 15, 2021, is to continue in effect beyond December 15, 2023.

The trafficking into the United States of illicit drugs, including fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, is causing the deaths of tens of thousands of Americans annually, as well as countless more non-fatal overdoses with their own tragic human toll. Drug cartels, transnational criminal organizations, and their facilitators are the primary sources of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals that fuel the current opioid epidemic, as well as drug-related violence that harms our communities. International drug trafficking—including the illicit production, global sale, and widespread distribution of illegal drugs; the rise of extremely potent drugs such as fentanyl and other synthetic opioids; as well as the growing role of Internet-based drug sales—continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 14059 with respect to global illicit drug trafficking.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr.
THE WHITE HOUSE, December 13, 2023.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful to host this last Special Order of 2023, and to allow my colleagues to speak on House Republicans' legislative efforts this week and achievements on behalf of Americans this whole entire year as we have taken over the majority at the start of 2023 and share a little bit about what we have accomplished.

This week we passed legislation to lower healthcare costs, increase price transparency regarding healthcare, allow schools to make their own choices on nutritional aspects, such as the type of milk that they provide to their students, and ensure Americans receive the answers they deserve regarding the inquiry into the Biden family's peddling schemes and nefarious business dealings.

Tomorrow, we will vote on the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2024, a comprehensive and robust bill that will provide for the needs of our servicemembers and enhance our national security efforts, while keeping liberal ideology out of our military.

I am pleased to have some of my colleagues here to speak on these bills and the ways that they have delivered for their constituents throughout the year.

No one has done that more than the Representative that will address this next, particularly on her strong focus with respect to defense. I have an Air Force Base that is part of who I am, part of where I grew up, so close to the community that I get to represent. She is in a very similar situation and has an intense focus on providing for her district and the needs of making sure that our men and women have what they need to secure our Nation and take the fight to our adversaries.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS).

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I have had the honor of working on this important legislation for months and am proud of the final bipartisan bill we produced to strengthen our national security.

One of the main reasons I came to Congress was to restore America's military strength and improve the quality of life for our servicemen and -women. This bill takes several critical steps to help us achieve that goal.

In total, this year's NDAA authorizes \$886 billion in national defense discretionary programs with the focus on improving our readiness and recruitment, supporting our servicemembers and their families, strengthening partnerships with our allies, increasing the lethality of our Joint Force, equipping our warfighters to successfully complete their mission, and ensuring vigorous oversight of taxpayer dollars at the Pentagon.

I wanted to speak specifically to a few components of the NDAA, why it is a great bill, why I am excited to support it and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

First of all, a large component of the NDAA is about supporting our servicemembers and their families. It secures the largest pay raise in 20 years for our servicemembers at 5.2 percent. We continue to see our servicemembers struggling with the economy. They are unable to afford things, not just gas and groceries, but things like buying a new home, buying a new car. We have servicemembers that still qualify for things like SNAP benefits and WIC benefits. We still see food pantries that exist on our bases. Providing that important pay raise, again the largest in over 20 years, was a very important component of taking care of our men and women.

This NDAA also authorizes \$356 million over the President's budget request to renovate and build new barracks. We had a GAO report come out recently that really highlighted some of our insufficiencies when it comes to housing, especially unaccompanied housing—the mold issues, the pest issues, and the out-of-date infrastructure that is old and dilapidated. We can do better for our servicemen and -women. This bill provides just that.

It is a starting point. There is a lot to do, but I am excited to support it for that reason. The NDAA also includes a parents bill of rights at DOD schools.

I represent Virginia's Second Congressional District, so it is kind of the birthplace of the parents' rights matter movement. We were able to incorporate why it is important to have parents involved in their children's school into this NDAA piece so that it applies to DOD schools as well.

The bill also authorizes DOD to reduce the out-of-pocket childcare expenses for military families and provides \$153 million over the President's budget request for the construction of new childcare centers. In my district, I have Naval Air Station Oceana. Our base has over 1,600 people on the waiting list. That is not acceptable, and my base is not alone.

If you were to look at other bases, they have the same amount on their waiting lists. We can do better than this. It is an important way to support our servicemembers and their families.

This bill also authorizes an additional berthing barge to provide a safe and healthy housing alternative for Navy servicemembers during dry-dock availabilities. We just had an article come out about the USS *Stennis* in Newport News, which is where the shipyard is. It will be the first to have off-ship housing, free WiFi, and better parking. We have to take care of our servicemen and -women who are in these extended port periods, especially when their ships are being repaired. This bill does just that.

This NDAA also provides oversight for taxpayer dollars. It cuts \$37 billion in inefficient weapons systems, Defense programs, and Pentagon bureaucracy. It requires mandatory DOD audits, and it also establishes a special inspector general to oversee and monitor security assistance going to Ukraine.

I have been a supporter of Ukraine. I think we need to continue to support that fight in Ukraine; however, it cannot be a blank check. There has to be some accountability, and this inspector general will do just that.

This NDAA also improves readiness and recruitment, and this is something I have been focused on. We have a recruitment, retention, quality of life task force that has been part of our Armed Services Committee. We have been focusing on that for several months now. This NDAA is a good place to start.

It creates a grant program to expand the capacity of our shipyards. We see

that we are behind in our shipbuilding capacity. We know that China is outpacing us. China is rapidly approaching 400 ships, while we are hovering at just under 300. It is so important that we invest in that shipbuilding piece and, additionally, supporting our ship repair industry.

This bill also increases the number of Junior ROTC programs and instructors at U.S. high schools. That is such an important part of our recruiting for our Armed Forces. I want people to be in our great Navy and Army and Air Force and to join our great military. It is a great way for people to have jobs and education benefits and healthcare. Plus, there is no better place to advertise for our military than starting with our young people. Putting that investment in the JROTC programs is so important, and this NDAA does that.

This bill also extends military recruitment and retention bonuses and special pay authorizations. We have got to stay competitive with civilian jobs that are out there. I know there is a lot of competition in workplaces, and this NDAA will help the military to stay competitive.

It also rejects the Biden administration's efforts to reduce the size of our Navy by protecting four battle force ships with years of service life remaining. The President had asked to decommission eight ships, and we reduced that number to four. We really can't afford to decommission any ships, in my opinion, but we cut it to four. We have to make sure that we are providing oversight of the money and investment that we are putting in ship repair. We need to watch that our ships are getting repaired and they are getting repaired on schedule because we need every single one of them.

This bill also establishes enlisted training pilot programs at community colleges offering more educational opportunities for our enlisted servicemen and -women. It prohibits DOD from contracting with any CCP or Chinese-owned or controlled company operating in the U.S., which is such an important piece of national security.

This NDAA also strengthens partnerships with our allies. We need our friends now more than ever. This bill fully funds our Pacific Deterrence Initiative. It provides for the implementation of the AUKUS agreement with Australia, unlocking over \$3 billion in Australian investments in the U.S. submarine industrial base.

It authorizes over \$987 million in INDOPACOM Commander priorities, which were left unfunded in the Biden budget. It strengthens training and advising for the military forces of Taiwan and extends authority for the transfer of weapons systems, as well as precision-guided munitions to Israel.

This NDAA also protects our own national security. We do have some border wins that we were able to get and secure in this NDAA. It fully funds the deployment of National Guardsmen in support of Border Patrol activities. It

extends the Pacific Deterrence Initiative to enhance U.S. deterrence and defense posture in the Indo-Pacific region. It funds initiative of \$14.7 billion, an increase of \$5.6 billion over the budget request. It prohibits the DOD from reducing the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles below 400 or reducing the responsiveness or alert status of the arsenal.

I am also proud that my colleagues from both sides of the aisle supported my effort to include critical provisions from my Sailor Standard of Care Act in our Nation's most important Defense bill. These provisions will directly benefit servicemembers and their families in Hampton Roads and throughout the country by improving our servicemembers' quality of life by increasing access to mental health care.

As a nurse practitioner, focusing on mental health care, especially for our military members and especially for our veterans, has been something that I fight for every single day. We had provisions of the Sailor Standard of Care Act get into the NDAA and into the Conference version, which we will be voting on tomorrow.

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Some of those provisions are that it examines reimbursement rates for mental health care providers under TRICARE.

When I meet with mental health care providers in my district, and throughout the country really, they have that same concern, they want to be reimbursed. There are not enough of them.

We want them to be partners in care for our military members and our veterans, so we need to make sure we are providing that reimbursement, and we are providing it in a timely manner.

This bill also directs the Navy to look into constructing and managing a dashboard to track quality-of-life programs and their utilization rate. So we are looking at things like healthcare, childcare, spouse employment, housing, and we are making sure we are providing the best services we can, again, for our military.

This bill requires a report on the feasibility of expanding TRICARE for life to include a benefit for the SilverSneakers program, mimicking the existing benefit that is included under some of our Medicare Advantage programs.

We had constituents that asked for this program. They want to utilize public gyms and recreation facilities, and so we would like the TRICARE program to cover it for our older adults who would love nothing more than to go exercise.

This bill also assesses the feasibility of providing additional mental health resources to limited-duty sailors. In Hampton Roads, we saw an increase in the suicide rates for sailors that we took out of the workplace, that we took out of the mission, and we kind of had them in a waiting area.

In this bill, we are looking at how long is that taking to medically process people out?

Are we providing those mandatory mental health screenings?

Are we taking care of them? Who is providing that care?

This bill is going to look at expanding that care so that chaplains can do it and corpsmen can do it. There is a shortage of mental health care providers. So really looking holistically at how we are providing the mental health services to our servicemen and -women and providing them with the best mental health services that we can.

The harsh reality is that the world is a dangerous place. The United States and its allies are facing unprecedented and rapidly evolving threats across the globe. China is outpacing us in warship production. China has 350 ships and is quickly moving to 400 ships compared with our 293.

Iranian proxies have attacked American bases and troops stationed overseas over 46 times since October 17. Israel is countering the most horrific attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

North Korea launched its first military reconnaissance satellite into orbit last month with the help of Russia. Russian aggression continues in Ukraine, with Putin threatening to go after NATO member countries next.

Now more than ever, we must prioritize and project American strength across the globe. This legislation goes a long way in achieving that goal. The goal of this legislation is deterrence, it is all about peace through strength. America leads the world in peacekeeping forces, and it is so important. I can think of no other country that I would want to have this role than our great Nation, the United States.

In closing, Madam Speaker, the fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act ensures our military can remain the best in the world. It refocuses our Nation's efforts on advancing military readiness and quality of life to make sure our men and women in uniform are ready to fight tonight.

As a former Navy helicopter pilot, as a third-generation veteran, military spouse, and mother to children who serve, I will always be the loudest voice for our military men and women in Congress. I urge all of my colleagues to support this critical legislation.

Passing this year's NDAA by a wide bipartisan margin would send an important signal to the men and women defending our freedom that those of us in Congress will rise above our differences to prioritize their needs and our national security above all else.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's comprehensive view of the defense bill that we are going to be finalizing tomorrow. The Senate is currently voting on it right now actually.

This is one of those amazing things that Congress finds a way to get something done for our servicemen and -women. You talk about TRICARE, not

only talk about TRICARE, but about the housing and the healthcare issues that our servicemen and -women face with rampant inflation going on. They get squeezed more than anybody.

They don't exist in the private sector. They can't go to their boss and ask for a raise. They are serving our Nation, and they are getting squeezed by the same type of fiscal policy that has created this type of inflation.

Our bill addresses so much of that, but it also goes to the lethal aid that we need to defend our Nation, the deterrence that you talk about. Particularly in my district, the F-35 program is so key and important, and the naval shipyards in Mrs. KIGGANS' district, so I thank her for the work that she does.

I am thrilled to be a part of something at this time of Christmas to show our servicemen and -women that their Representatives care about them and want them to be successful. We look forward to finishing up that process this week.

I am going to spend some time tonight talking a little bit about the always fun question that we get to talk about. I remember lobbying this question over to the Democrats when they were in the majority quite often: What have you accomplished? You do a bunch of messaging bills, and none of them get passed in the Senate.

Now that we have had the opportunity to be in the majority for just less than a year, as it comes up on the end of the year here, it is good to take a moment to think about what we have accomplished. Can we answer that question?

What do we need to do to address any criticism that may be out there? Have you accomplished enough? Washington is a tough place.

I look forward to having a chance to look back on the year and share a few wins. I will try to articulate it here a little bit, but there is always a unique context.

The part I keep reflecting on is, I came to Congress in January 2021, and I have been here almost 3 years. What is important to look at is juxtapose 2023 with 2021. President Biden was in the White House. The Senate for the last 3 years has been controlled by a Democrat majority.

For the first 2 years of my time here, we had what I will call a triple majority, when you have the White House, Senate, and the House in one-party control.

2023 versus 2021. Immediately, as we entered into the 117th Congress, the Georgia Senate flipped, which I think was a surprise to the Democrats. It was a surprise to the Republicans, but we will work to rectify that.

However, within a month and a half, with budget reconciliation—where it does not have to go through the Senate filibuster because we didn't have the majority in the House—there was a \$2 trillion bill passed immediately, a \$2 trillion bill that was masquerading as a COVID relief bill. We had addressed the

COVID relief bills in a bipartisan approach prior to that. There was a \$2 trillion bill that got passed with no offset spending, completely additive to the national debt.

Within months after that, we saw the fastest increase in inflation that we have seen in 40 years to the point where you basically wipe out an entire family's salary for a month of each year with the amount of inflation that happened so quickly.

That doesn't just happen. That happens because of monetary policy. When you add and you load the system with that type of spending, you immediately get inflation. That is not just a Republican saying that; it is not just a Democrat saying that. That is the way economics works. When you load monetary policy and you have so much money chasing so few goods, prices for Americans skyrocket, particularly middle-class and lower-income Americans.

Just being in the majority, what has taken place in 2023? We curbed trillions of dollars of spending. When the majority at that time, the Democratic Party, had the White House, House, and Senate, they could virtually pass any type of fiscally related, budget-related bill that they wanted without having to go through the Senate filibuster to reach compromise.

In those circumstances, they can pass a bill on party lines. They chose within the first month and a half to pass a \$2 trillion bill that led to the most rapid increase in inflation that most Americans have seen in their lifetime. You are seeing inflation still high. We are still reeling with the effects of that, but it has leveled off because Republicans are in control of the House of Representatives.

Just by being in control of the House of Representatives, and the hard work that it took to win back the majority, we immediately curbed all of that spending. It wasn't just the \$2 trillion bill. They passed an Inflation Reduction Act, the IRA, that had nothing to do with inflation, but that was nearly a trillion-dollar bill. They thought maybe it was going to be \$400- to \$600 billion. It is now estimated to be well over that.

What that bill was was a failed Solyndra-type policy. It is broadly accepted among Republicans and Democrats that the Obama-era kind of mini Green New Deal with Solyndra and this tax break that was given to them was a massive failure. This isn't just, again, a Republican saying that. That is largely accepted that a \$500 million bill was largely a failure. That is a lot of money, and that is a big failure for the type of policy you are trying to create. That was \$500 million.

The Inflation Reduction Act, which basically mimics what took place with Solyndra, where you are trying to pick winners and losers in the energy world, was in the range of \$400 billion, which is far more expensive than what it was even billed to be.

By being in the majority, we keep all of this stuff at bay, and we keep that amount of monetary supply from ever even reaching the system. With the addition of having to raise interest rates as high as we did, that will curb inflation. If I say nothing else, that is an enormous win for what our Republican majority is doing.

President Biden had a \$5 trillion tax-and-spend plan—much of which he wasn't even able to accomplish because it wasn't popular enough even among Democrats to pass—that we were able to defeat over the last 3 years, but still that amount of spending got put through.

As I talk about some more things here, that is key. I hope that Americans can understand that by Republicans creating a split government, we make it so that we don't allow a Democrat agenda. That is, during the election, when it was former Vice President Biden and current Senator BERNIE SANDERS, they were going back and forth saying: Oh, I don't agree with your policies, you know, Senator SANDERS. I am the more moderate candidate. I will be smarter with fiscal responsibility. That was what the former Vice President, candidate at the time, Biden said.

As soon as he got the White House, House, and Senate under one-party control, they basically implemented a BERNIE SANDERS-type approach. He probably wanted several more trillion, but to put a \$5 trillion tax-and-spend policy together, it was catastrophic, and every single American felt it.

I could go on and on about the fiscal side of things. It is clear that in order to get inflation under control, Republicans in the majority are the best thing that we have going for us in the House. We level off that spending, and we try to curb that back down. I am hopeful that we can continue to be successful at that.

I am the father of four young boys. I am terrified of their future with the amount of money that we are borrowing for our national debt each year, what we are having to spend more and more to cover the debt servicing. It is really scary.

Let me take it out of the fiscal side. In January of 2023, Americans were done with COVID. We didn't need these COVID policies to still exist. We needed to move on. Republicans put a bill on the floor to end the COVID emergency that was still in place with President Biden after almost 3 years in the White House.

The very week we put that bill—we announced that bill was going to be voted on on Wednesday or Thursday. By Tuesday, the White House had announced, yeah, we are actually going to pull that back now. That type of stuff doesn't happen unless we are in the majority, and we force the White House to pull back. They recognize it is not popular. Even Democrats were going to support our resolution to end the COVID emergency, and the White

House responded. They respond when we push back on bad policy.

These things are simple examples, but as you can see, we are in a position to be able to force the Biden administration to accept commonsense policy.

Another one, Chairman COMER and the Representative from Georgia, ANDREW CLYDE, put together some very sensible, well-thought-out resolutions to push back on the direction that Washington, D.C., was approaching some of their crime legislation and how they were dealing with basic crime in the city.

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All of a sudden, we didn't know how it was going to play out, but they put that up. Democrats recognized it. They actually read it and said: Do you know what? This actually makes a lot of sense. We can't be this soft on crime.

Just by us putting forth that legislation, the White House came out and said: You are right. We are going to sign that into law.

This doesn't happen that often. Usually, there is just kind of: If the Republicans suggested it in the House, we are just going to veto it.

We are putting forth commonsense policies that the American people broadly agree with. By doing so, we are forcing the Biden administration to come onboard.

How many times did President Biden say: We are doing a clean debt ceiling. We are not going to address anything in the debt ceiling.

The debt ceiling gives us an opportunity to address the fiscal state of our Nation. Republicans stood firm. We put together a really strong bill, sent it over to the Senate, and let the White House know that we are going to demand significant changes in our trajectory. That was met with months and months of inaction from the White House.

What took place after they started negotiations? They recognized that President Biden was not going to be able to continue to spend like he was. He was going to have to accept that Republicans are going to stand firm to lower discretionary spending.

For the first time in over a decade, maybe more, we are going to spend fewer dollars in our discretionary budget than we did the year before. Usually, these grow at a rate of 1 to 5 percent. This is a time where we are actually going to reduce it, saving over \$2 trillion in a 10-year span, cutting out that much from the budget, putting caps on it.

We got that accomplished, and we are working through that process right now. I look forward to finalizing that in the first part of the year and realizing those true cuts.

Are there bills that we force President Biden to sign? Yes. I am really proud of the work that we have done.

Are there things that we have accomplished here in the House that are historic? Look at H.R. 1 and H.R. 2. They

are the two best energy and border immigration bills that you have ever seen come out of this place.

If we adhere to it, we would be living in true prosperity with respect to how we approach our energy. We would be doing it cleaner, safer, and with better standards than anywhere in the world.

We would be trusting our industry instead of outsourcing and sort of outsourcing that guilt. "I am okay with Iranian oil. I am okay if Russia continues to do that." We don't sanction the Nord Stream pipeline, but we sanction and get rid of our own pipelines. It does not make sense. The energy policies of the Biden administration do not make sense.

What are we doing as a majority to push back? We stood firm on the debt ceiling to make sure that we got portions of H.R. 1. We would love for that whole bill to be passed. It is apparently not going to, but we took portions of that.

Some of the worst going on in our economy right now is this horrible permitting process through these archaic NEPA standards. We stood firm and said this doesn't go through unless you give us this type of permitting reform.

We are doing the exact same thing right now, using our majority. For the first time that I have been here in 3 years, Democrats in the House and the Senate are saying: If we are going to move forward on Ukraine, I get that Republicans are going to stand firm on the border.

We were having 1,000 to 2,000 encounters from the last three Presidents, Republican and Democratic Presidents, mind you. We are over 10,000. We have had millions and millions of encounters. We do not have control of our southern border, and Republicans are saying, with our majority, we are going to stand firm.

That is going on right now, similar to how we used the debt ceiling leverage to be able to accomplish some very good policy changes.

It is not easy to be in split government. It is a lot of back and forth and a lot of, "This is your fault. It is not our fault," a lot of name-calling, a lot of back and forth on this.

We are standing firm on the key things that matter to our Nation—energy and immigration and border policies that make sense and are humane.

We cannot have the cartels running the border. They are making billions and billions of dollars by taking advantage of policy. It is so simple. It would actually improve President Biden's approval rating if he would recognize that the Migrant Protection Protocols that were in the previous administration were actually quite positive. They saved lives. They saved our National Guardsmen and -women's lives. They saved immigrants' lives.

It is nonsensical that we can't do it. We are going to use any opportunity we can to do that. That is how we are using our majority.

I have talked about H.R. 1 and H.R. 2. Those bills should be passed. If they

truly went on policy, the Senate would recognize that, and we would have a much better outlook for some of the key things that we are doing.

It is not a reality, I get that, but what from those bills can we make sure that we get done? That is the stuff that we are working on. That is where we are pushing our majority.

Another one that I have been heavily involved with—and I think back 3 years ago. It was considered a conspiracy theory that there were any nefarious business dealings going on with Hunter Biden. The media wasn't reporting it. Social media entities were kind of squashing it. They were suppressing this information. This was all during an election year.

Fast-forward 3 years. You have now Hunter Biden not willing to show up to a deposition, but he is here saying he did a lot of wrong things, admitting fully.

Another nine indictments have just come out. It would have been more if the investigation wouldn't have been slow-played so that the 2014 and 2015 tax crimes weren't covered under a statute of limitations or limited from that statute of limitations. There would be significantly more to be able to prosecute Hunter Biden on.

The American people 3 years ago thought that that was just a hoax. If we are not in the majority—if Republicans are not in the majority, there is no admission that what Hunter Biden had done with his business dealings was illegal. There would have been no subpoena power to be able to share that.

In the Ways and Means Committee, we have jurisdiction over the IRS. Some very brave IRS whistleblowers came forward and provided some testimony.

We have to keep that completely quiet. We are not publicizing this. These are private meetings. We are not trying to get clicks because of this. We got ahold of this testimony, and we had to be mum about it. We couldn't say a word. From Thursday the week before all the way until Thursday the next week, I wasn't allowed to say a word about it.

We knew on that Thursday we were going to be releasing the whistleblower testimony that basically claims that there was an investigation into Hunter Biden and that the Department of Justice was slow-playing it, was giving preferential treatment. There were inconsistencies on how they were prosecuting or moving forward with this investigation.

That was to take place on Thursday. We were going to release all this information. For the last 3 years, there could have been a plea deal announced with Hunter Biden.

It was Tuesday morning. This was to be released on Thursday, but Tuesday morning, all of our phones blew up with a notification that said Hunter Biden just went into a plea deal.

I called our committee and asked if we knew about that. I mean, we are set

to release this information, the whistleblower's testimony, on Thursday. Did we know about this? No, we didn't. This just came out.

It immediately reminded me of why it is important for Republicans to be in the majority and what we are doing in this majority.

We said: We have to end the COVID emergencies. We are going to put a bill on the floor.

Within a day of when the White House realized we were going to put a bill on the floor, they decided to end the COVID emergency measures.

Fast forward to June when this whistleblower information was going to be released. There was, all of a sudden, a plea deal on Tuesday before we were going to release it on Thursday.

What has happened since? We released this information. It is very credible information. They have been vetted over and over again.

The information they provided is disturbing. It shows illegality. It shows a connection from Hunter Biden to what extent President Biden—maybe Vice President at the time, from 2016 to 2020, before he ran—is involved.

There are alias emails. There are WhatsApp messages. This reeks. The American people recognize that. The vast majority of people say: Okay, there really was corruption going on here.

That was to be released on Thursday. We released it on Thursday. That plea deal has fallen through. There have been significantly more allegations and indictments that are going to be posed to Hunter Biden.

It was clearly a plea deal that was not sound. Now that the whistleblower information is out there that we used our Republican majority to release to the public, to let them make the decision, we all of a sudden are changing the way that Americans know what is going on with their government.

I get a little frustrated when I hear, "What are you doing with your majority?" We are creating government accountability.

Go look at the Commitment to America that we started off with, that Speaker MCCARTHY pushed hard to get ready to go for when we took back the majority. You can go down the list, from energy, pro-growth tax policy, immigration and border, and government accountability.

We created, in the first of this term, a competitiveness against China. It was very bipartisan, very sincere, no messaging along with it. They just put out a report on how to go about doing it.

Our Ways and Means Committee is working with GSP to incentivize closer allied countries, to bolster them up, get them involved in our trade agreements so we can move some of our manufacturing from China.

These are the ways that we are creating a productive way forward on how we are leveraging our majority to deliver for the American people.

The last 3 years have been tough to watch on an international stage. National security and foreign policy is something that I get heavily involved in. I have a background in it. I love seeing our Nation work to solve some of these problems.

Our allies in Israel know that they have our support. This has largely been bipartisan, and I have appreciated the dialogue that it has created with our colleagues.

Ukraine is in a tumultuous place with the regime, with President Putin and what he has done. They have been able to fight back with our assistance.

We need to make sure that we don't let—the reality is that we have a major border problem. The fixes are actually quite simple.

I still remember talking to Vice President Pence and the process they went through to create a simple policy that said: Make your asylum claims, but you have to remain in Mexico during that process.

That alleviates the pressure at the border, and that disincentivizes the cartel activity so they have no real leverage down there.

Now, they are lying to people, saying as soon as you get across the border, you get lost in the system, but you will be in America, and all will be well. That is a lie to those immigrants who are coming here, hoping for a better future.

It is a simple fix. That is all we are asking for, and we are going to require it as we move forward on supporting our friend and ally Ukraine.

We are taking control. We are making sure our government works, and we are using our majority to solve problems.

There are a whole bunch of additional things on this chart. As I look back, I am extremely proud of the work that we have done over the last year.

I will end with the National Defense Authorization Act. It has authorized \$886 billion for critical national defense priorities. That is an increase of \$28 billion over the fiscal year.

While we are still finding wasteful cuts within the entire discretionary budget, this bill sets the standard for the readiness and modernization improvements that Congress needs to make sure that our defense has what they need to excel.

This includes a 5.2 percent increase in servicemember basic pay to account for inflation. It can't account for all the inflation, but like I started with, we try to level that off using our Republican majority to squash massive funding measures that go out from the Biden administration.

We are also trying to increase what we can provide to our servicemen and -women. It commits \$360 million to bolster housing assistance and childcare support for military families and funds crucial military construction improvements across the country.

It accelerates advanced radar and technology development to address

emerging threats to our homeland, provides DOD with a multiyear procurement certainty to increase stockpiles of critical minerals and rare earth elements, and funds the ground-based strategic deterrent.

The bill also prevents land purchases by Chinese-backed entities and prevents DOD research grants from going to universities that partner with Chinese entities.

The NDAA for fiscal year 2024 also includes several conservative wins, such as banning the teaching of CRT in the military, ending the bureaucratic DEI overreach, establishing a parents bill of rights for military schools, and preventing the military Green New Deal.

It is not where we need to be establishing energy policy. You can just grab H.R. 1 if you want to establish a real energy policy.

□ 1900

All these wins are with a Democrat-controlled White House and Senate. These are significant wins.

When you really think about it, I didn't expect to have so many under a split government. It goes back to what Leader STEVE SCALISE said, that these are commonsense policies. When you cut through the politics of it and you can build better relationships with our partners on the Democratic side of the aisle, you can really look through and see that, yes, this makes sense.

I was kind of told by my media network that this is bad. Some voices back in my primary would say that I can't support anything that a Republican does. But this is actually quite reasonable. We need more of that.

We are sincerely trying to push more of that, and that is why we have been able to accomplish so much with opposition of the party in the White House and the Senate.

This is just the first 11 months of work, but my colleagues and I look forward to—first, a merry Christmas and a happy new year; I hope that we get back to be with our families—coming back ready to build on these wins and finish a lot of what we started: to get our fiscal house in order, ensure we have a strong defense, and deliver for the American people.

That is something that every single one of us, regardless of party, wants. We differ on the approach many times, but we want the same end goals.

I urge my Democratic colleagues to recognize that the stuff we are putting forward is truly common sense, and not to let politics continue to get in the way. As we approach how to navigate and get that done in the crazy political system like we have, common sense will win out.

My colleagues and I are really just thrilled and proud to be able to emphasize and show what we have done, and I look forward to building on these.

As we wrap up the NDAA this week and look to finalize the funding for much of this, let's continue to keep the American people as the guide on what

we want to accomplish, not our own personal political endeavors, but to truly know what is best for the American people and do a better job of that.

We as a Republican majority will continue to deliver with those types of commonsense policies.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: DELIVERING IN THE FACE OF REPUBLICAN CHAOS

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

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Madam Speaker, we are here talking about the work that we have done, or tried to do, in this past year. This week is the last week Members of this body will gather to work on legislative business for 2023.

The last time I convened the Special Order hour, my colleagues and I came to the floor to discuss the impact that the debt ceiling would have on everyday, working people. We said over and over that a debt ceiling agreement that shortchanged funding for vital programs shortchanges everyday people.

I find that, much like in May, we are in the same place fighting to protect and to preserve the programs our communities need. Just like in May, I am here to remind this body why we were sent here and who sent us here: Our constituents.

Let me be clear. Who sent us here are our constituents, not MAGA extremists, not lobbyists, and definitely not Donald Trump.

This year, my colleagues and I on the Congressional Progressive Caucus have been fighting like hell for policies that protect people, including expanding healthcare for DACA recipients; addressing gun violence; securing protections for the workforce; and centering our policies around equity and justice.

I am proud to say that we have been able to deliver for our communities, yes, even in the midst of chaos. While we were able to accomplish so little—although I know that my colleague tried to talk a little bit about what the GOP tried to do—I am convening this Special Order hour to speak truth to power.

Madam Speaker, let me be clear and say that Republicans have held progress hostage. It has been a year, and we have spent more time on speaker election elections—19 to be exact—point-

less censures, and political theater, jeopardizing the safety and the well-being of people, instead of moving policy that improves their lives.

We have spent countless hours subjected to words that dehumanize and devalue Brown and Black people, and I have witnessed firsthand as Members across the aisle call immigrants vile names like infestations over and over again, not just here but during my committee hearings; denying their humanity.

I have spent more time attending vigils than celebrating life because Republicans are intent on holding up bills that would address gun violence.

I have spent more time voting “no” to protect my constituents from harmful cuts and reckless policies than I have had the opportunity to vote “yes” to legislation that prioritizes working people and families.

I have spent more time on picket lines affirming that workers deserve living wages, protection from retaliation, and the right to collectively bargain than actually passing policies that ensure that all workers are compensated well, respected, and valued.

When I was elected to Congress, I told my community that I was committed to delivering results. I am here today to say that in the face of everyday Republican-manufactured obstacles to progress, their political games, their disorganization, and their opposition to honoring our shared humanity, I remained true to my commitments and my values as a Member of Congress.

I have remained focused on delivering results for Illinois' Third Congressional District and honoring our diverse multicultural, multigenerational community.

I am not alone.

My colleagues in the Congressional Progressive Caucus have also remained true to their commitment and their values and focused on delivering for their districts. I am grateful to be flanked by such dedicated, persevering, and courageous leaders.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to welcome one of my colleagues to share some of the progress that she has made and what Congress must still continue to do to accomplish and deliver for the people.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I stand here today because we are just 1 month from another government shutdown, and Congressional Republicans have demonstrated once again that they are more concerned about satisfying their culture warrior base than actually addressing any of the problems their constituents face.

Madam Speaker, that hasn't stopped us from delivering for our districts. I am here because the everyday working-class people of Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties came together to say, everybody should have a livable

wage, clean air and water, affordable housing, decent transportation, and healthcare.

The people I represent resoundingly rejected the status quo and decades of corporations leaving us behind and polluting our communities without accountability. They demanded political representation that will actually try to solve the problems they face and not play political games with their lives.

Our movement's detractors, including those in Congress, many of them, will try to make you believe that people from working-class backgrounds representing working-class districts are too consumed by fighting national political battles and don't do enough to deliver for our districts.

Let me be clear. Key priorities of the Biden administration, like the Inflation Reduction Act, would not have happened without progressives here fighting tooth and nail to ensure that our communities had what they needed to thrive. Despite Republicans' dysfunction, we haven't stopped fighting even for one second.

We are proud to have delivered in my district nearly \$1 billion in Federal investments for infrastructure, affordable housing, STEM innovation, clean air, and good-paying jobs because the people of Western Pennsylvania and across the country deserve leaders in Congress who have lived their struggles and work as hard as they do.

Whether it was delivering \$400 million from the Department of Energy's clean financing program to fund EOS, a battery storage manufacturer that will employ thousands of workers in PA-12's Mon Valley, in particular, or the over \$150 million to improve transit in Pittsburgh, or helping to deliver \$50 million for affordable housing in the historically divested Hill District of Pittsburgh.

Our movement in Pennsylvania is delivering on priorities that won't just improve our communities but the lives of people across the country. We are demonstrating the power we can recognize when communities that have been left behind elect leaders that have actually gone through what they have.

Throughout history, and particularly over the past four decades, working-class people, disproportionately Black and Brown, have been told our priorities are too radical, our needs are too unrealistic, and that our lives are expendable. Our movement stands in direct contrast to that, standing up to monied interests and fighting for our communities to be healthier, stronger, and more resilient.

The wins we have secured that I have talked about today represent just a small part of what our movement has done while in elected office, and you can be sure we are not done yet.

On the other side, Republicans are demonstrating that they are fundamentally unserious when it comes to addressing the problems that their constituents face, and all of our constituents.