

Olive, IL, in the Union Miners Cemetery, the only union-owned cemetery in America.

Aside from being legends of labor history, Upton Sinclair, A. Philip Randolph, and Mother Jones had something else in common. They are all members of the Illinois Labor History Society's Union Hall of Honor, which was founded in 1969 to make sure that important figures and defining chapters of America's labor history are not forgotten.

The society's highest honor is to be named to its Union Hall of Honor. Last month, a longtime friend of mine, John Penn, was inducted into the Illinois Labor History Society's Union Hall of Honor. After nearly 60 years of protecting workers' rights in Illinois, the Midwest, and our Nation, John has certainly earned that honor. He is one of 113 men and women who have been inducted into the Union Hall of Honor, but to me John is one in a million.

He got his first union card in 1965, when he was 16 years old, joining the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 362 in Bloomington, IL. He took a break by joining the United States Air Force, serving in Vietnam, Korea, Guam, and then returning back to Bloomington and Local 362.

It was the same path taken a generation earlier by his father, Paul Penn, a World War II veteran who rose to become president of the same local. But John's family connections didn't win any special treatment. He had to rise through the ranks, and rise he did—from business manager of Local 362 to business manager of the 36-county North Central Illinois Laborers' District Council, then business manager of the four-state Great Plains Laborers' District Council, and, in 2008, vice president and regional manager of LIUNA's 10-State Midwest region and a member of the international union's general executive board, positions to which he has been reelected three different times.

Under John Penn's leadership, LIUNA Local 362 grew, giving a voice to scores of workers who previously had never benefited from union representation.

Some years ago, in response to several tragic accidents, John made himself known to many by stopping all highway construction in McLean County to force the State of Illinois to improve protections for vulnerable construction workers and others on the State's roadways. That action culminated in the creation of the Illinois State's Work Zone Safety Committee and implementation of numerous policies that saved lives.

Somehow, John also found time to resurrect Bloomington's Labor Day parade, to serve on several community and State boards, including the United Way of McLean County, the Children's Christmas Party for Unemployed Families, Illinois Special Olympics, the McLean County Promise Council, and the Bloomington-Normal Advancement and Economic Development Council.

He was honored by his hometown newspaper, the Bloomington Pantagraph, as its 2003 Person of the Year. He received a Thousand Points of Light Foundation award from then-President Clinton in 1997 in recognition of his volunteer efforts and those of all Bloomington-Normal building tradespeople who he recruited over the years to take part in these organizations.

At the end of this month, John Penn is retiring from this position with the Laborers' union. As he begins this new chapter, Loretta and I wish John and Mary, his wife of 55 years, good health, good times with their daughter Shawn, their children and grandchildren.

John, you made a real difference for so many people. You are truly a hall of famer, and thanks for all that you have done.

MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in the last two centuries, Federal support for scientific research has helped to split the atom, defeat polio, explore space, create the internet, map the human genome, develop vaccines and treatments for COVID-19, and so much more.

No nation has made such significant investments in science, and no nation's scientists have done more to improve the quality of life.

But with the challenges we face today, from devastating diseases to climate change, there is more progress to be made.

So America is at a turning point, and unless we commit to providing strong and sustained funding increases for our Nation's premier medical and scientific researchers, our position as the world leader will be at risk.

That is exactly why, since 2014, I have continued to introduce legislation to keep our Nation on the cutting edge. It is entitled the American Cures Act.

This bill will provide our top medical research Agencies with 5 percent real funding growth every year. That is steady, predictable growth, pegged above the rate of inflation.

This money would support the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Defense Health Program, and the Veterans' Affairs Medical and Prosthetics Research Program.

This investment would be game-changing for the Agencies. Consider the National Institutes of Health. It is our Nation's—if not the world's—premier medical research Agency. Their pioneering work at this single agency saves lives and fuels our economy, supporting nearly 20,000 jobs just in my home State of Illinois.

Today, the NIH budget is \$47.5 billion. More than 95 percent of this funding is competitively awarded to scientists, research institutions, and small businesses in every State across the country.

Researchers supported by the NIH make tens of thousands of new discov-

eries every year—breakthroughs that could literally change the world.

In recognition of these remarkable feats, Congress has, on a bipartisan basis, increased the NIH annual budget by more than \$17 billion since I first introduced the American Cures Act in 2014.

This chart is an indication of that growth. It has gone from \$30 billion to \$48 billion in that period of time since 2014—a 58-percent increase.

These increases would not have been possible without a bipartisan effort in the U.S. Senate.

I enlisted a willing participant and ally and really effective Member of the Senate, PATTY MURRAY, to be part of this; former Senator Roy Blunt of Missouri, who, when the Republicans were in majority control of the Senate, kept up this promise to increase the spending; and retired Senator Lamar Alexander from Tennessee, who shared our passion for medical research.

Luckily, we had a leader at the time, Dr. Francis Collins, former Director of the NIH, who really did his part in enlisting support for these increases.

NIH is not the only Federal medical research Agency to see significant funding increases. We have also secured \$2.4 billion in increased funding for the CDC over the last 9 years. That is a 35-percent increase since fiscal year 2014.

And while it is not reflected in the chart I just showed, both the CDC and NIH also received billions in supplemental funding from COVID rescue bills passed by the Senate in 2020 and 2021.

While this year's budget provided a 5.8-percent bump to the NIH, a \$2.5 billion increase, I am sorry to say we fell short of the 5-percent real-growth target above inflation.

If we had met this target, NIH would have received \$650 million, up to a level of more than \$48 billion.

That said, I am still encouraged about how far we have come. We finally reversed a 22-percent decline in NIH purchasing power that took place after 12 years of flat funding, but we need to step up our efforts.

Diseases like cancer, stroke, opioid addiction, and mental illness will not wait on us. Half of all men and one-third of all women in the U.S. will develop cancer in their lifetime. Someone's mother, father, brother, sister, or spouse is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease every 65 seconds.

And 1 in every 300 people will be diagnosed with ALS in their lifetime. Sadly, a number of my closest friends already have received this diagnosis.

Sustained and robust NIH funding will help cure, prevent, and treat these diseases. It will help the people that we all care about the most, and it already has.

Because of NIH funding—listen to this—the American Cancer Society estimates that nearly 3½ million lives were saved between 1991 and 2019 as a result of improvements in cancer treatment, detection, and prevention—a 32-

percent drop in the cancer death rate since 1991.

Thirty years ago, HIV was a death sentence, but because of NIH research, that is no longer the case.

And because of NIH funding, we are also on the verge of curing—yes, curing—sickle cell anemia, an inherited blood disorder that primarily affects African Americans.

Consider this: NIH funding contributed to research associated with every new drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration from 2010 to 2019.

Let me repeat that for emphasis. There are only two countries in the world that allow general advertising of prescription drugs—the United States and New Zealand. You can't turn on the television without hearing the story of a new drug. Every single drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration from 2010 to 2019 started off with government-funded, taxpayer-funded research at the National Institutes of Health.

So when you see these wonderful drugs, understand we, as Americans, put down the initial investment that made these drugs all possible.

However, there is a real threat to our Nation's investment in medical research. The new House Republican majority, after more than a dozen—in fact, 15—painful and embarrassing failed votes to secure the Speaker, announced that Speaker McCarthy had finally won the day, he made some deals, agreements with MAGA Republicans for that to happen.

One of those agreements would literally devastate funding for medical research in the future. What a price to pay.

He reportedly agreed to hamstringing government funding for 2024 at 2022 levels—a senseless move—senseless move—that would cut funding for scientific breakthroughs by roughly 7 percent and delay the delivery of new cures and treatments for those most in need.

So I would like to know, for the record, which diseases and conditions would Speaker McCarthy and the House Republicans like us to slash funding for? Cancer? Alzheimer's? Parkinson's? Diabetes? ALS? Heart disease? Which one?

Speak up, Mr. Speaker. This is supposed to be a new transparent House of Representatives. If you are going to cut funding in medical research, what can we put on the back of the burner, and how can we explain that to the families across America?

Now is not the time for political horse-trading that puts one person in power at the expense of everyone waiting for a cure.

We need to build on the bipartisan success which we have had to date and we have achieved over the past decade and continue to prioritize medical research funding that creates jobs but, most importantly, saves lives.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

SOUTHERN BORDER

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to talk about the border one more time, but I was intrigued by the rhetorical questions my friend from Illinois has asked the Speaker.

I have got a question for President Biden: When you say that you are not going to negotiate on the debt ceiling, does that mean that the Federal Government is going to continue to rack up more and more debt on top of the \$30 trillion that we already owe, particularly during inflationary times when interest rates on that debt basically are eating up more and more of our discretionary budget?

To me, if the answer is yes, I am going to refuse to negotiate as we continue to rack up more and more debt, about two-thirds of which is on autopilot, as the Presiding Officer knows—it is mandatory spending. That is a supremely irresponsible position to take.

President Biden, when he was in the Senate, was known as a dealmaker, and as I said yesterday, during 2011, he negotiated with Senator McConnell the Budget Control Act, which was probably the most recent response, sort of a mixed bag as it was, to try to control Federal spending. It was a noble effort, although it did not succeed.

So I know our friends on the Democratic side would like to sort of add to Mr. McCarthy's challenges. We have got 6 months, perhaps, between now and the time the extraordinary measures the Treasury Department is going to be using to make sure we don't actually breach that debt limit, but I would suggest that the time would be better used, rather than sort of to add gasoline to the fire, to actually try to solve the problem. And the problem—the debt limit—is real. It needs to be addressed by two people: Speaker McCarthy and the President of the United States. Because anything the Senate were to pass with 60 votes, which would be required, would certainly be dead on arrival in the House of Representatives.

And so as a practical matter, while we are going to be very interested and engaged in the debate and discussion, that is where the decision is going to have to be made sometime between now and the time extraordinary measures are exhausted, perhaps as early as June.

But in the meantime, for the President of the United States, who represents not just Democrats, who represents all Americans—all 330 million-plus of us—to say: I am not negotiating, even though he has got a track record as a Senator and as a Vice President of negotiating hard things like this, to me, is an irresponsible answer, and I hope he will reconsider.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Now, Mr. President, to talk about what I came here to talk about—talk about the border.

I live in a border State. We have 1,200 miles of border with Mexico. We have, as a country, 2,000 miles of border with Mexico. And we are seeing numbers of people showing up at the border that we have never seen before—millions of people since President Biden was sworn in as President on January 20, 2021, millions of people showing up, many of whom are claiming asylum and seeking to immigrate permanently into the United States under the asylum laws. Because the administration has a policy of releasing those individuals into the interior of the United States to await a future immigration court hearing, which may be years in the future because of backlog, many of those individuals do not show up at their immigration court hearing but simply are willing to play the odds that they can just melt into the Great American heartland and not be returned or repatriated to their country of origin or actually have to appear at an asylum hearing.

We know that, statistically, the number of people who actually do show up for an asylum hearing in front of an immigration judge, only roughly 90 percent of them fail to meet the very stringent requirement for asylum, which is basically a credible fear of persecution based on some classification: race, sex, ethnic origin, or the like. That is a very narrow test, and it certainly does not include fear of poverty or even violence in your home country. Yet the policy of the Biden administration to basically create open borders and place individuals who show up and claim asylum—these are not people trying to run away from the Border Patrol, by the way. These are people who are turning themselves in because they know they can play the system, and they will be able to make their way into the United States without any consequences—certainly, no legal consequences.

I am sure those of my colleagues who have visited the border—and we had a bipartisan group just a couple weeks ago who did visit again both Yuma, AZ, and El Paso. But as my colleagues can attest, there is no data, there is no image there, frankly, or no words to adequately convey the complexity of what is happening at the border today. To understand, you have to see and hear for yourself.

Several years ago, I traveled to Brooks County, which is a little county in South Texas, where I visited a ranch that the Border Patrol had a rescue beacon in the middle of.

And just to explain, the Border Patrol does a lot of humanitarian rescues because, as you can imagine, people coming from Central America, up across the land bridge into Mexico, up to the United States, many of them show up dehydrated, suffering from exposure, and some of them, frankly, die on the trip. But the Border Patrol, while they have the responsibility of enforcing our immigration laws at the border and interdicting illegal drugs,