

I am glad to let eastern North Carolina and the American people know that Delta flight 5310 has landed, and Ms. Cassie is here in Washington, D.C., safe and sound with her son, Frank, and caretaker, Faye. Ms. Cassie can check that one off her bucket list.

From working on the farm, turned maid, and now special guest at 109 years old, what an American story and inspiration. Her presence at our Nation's Capitol embodies the very essence of why we have the opportunity to assemble and our democratic values.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed with great honor I share Ms. Cassie Smith's story.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF FORMER CHIEF OF BORDER PATROL RAUL ORTIZ

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

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Speaker, I was troubled to recently hear that former chief of Border Patrol, Raul Ortiz, never spoke to either President Biden or the Vice President and so-called border czar KAMALA HARRIS in the 2 years he headed up security at our southern border.

In a recent interview, Chief Ortiz said he never had a single conversation with either of them. He went on to say: "That is a problem," given that he commanded 21,000 border patrolmen.

I would argue it is more than a problem. At the very least, it is an indication that border security was never and has not been a priority for our Commander in Chief.

It is a bit like abandoning a soldier on the battlefield, Mr. Speaker. Because of the policies of the Biden administration, Ortiz had to endure an unprecedented surge of illegal immigration month after month. In his 2½ years at the helm, there were more than 5 million illegal immigrant encounters and 1½ million got-aways during that period. His patrolmen seized more than 50,000 pounds of fentanyl at the southern border by the time of his retirement at the end of last June.

When asked about whether the White House was sending mixed messages to Mexico, Central America, and beyond, he said, without hesitation: Yes.

That mixed messaging was heard loud and clear when President Biden was on the campaign trail in 2019 and said that the United States could take another 2 million immigrants "in a heartbeat." That message got even louder after he took office. In no time, he halted Border Patrol activity, wall construction, and ended the successful remain in Mexico asylum policy.

It is also important to consider that Ortiz was at the helm when title 42 was lifted. All of the experts warned that an unprecedented surge in illegal immigration would follow if that authority was lifted. Nevertheless, the Biden administration fought tirelessly for its end.

Imagine overseeing the border and not getting a single call from those

undoing years of border policy. Imagine the stress, the staffing challenges, the human trafficking and drug crime, all happening with the stroke of a pen and without your input.

Under the Biden administration, we have seen an unprecedented abuse of parole authority, resulting in more than 1 million immigrants being allowed to enter the United States. The President clearly kept that 2019 campaign promise, and it appears he kept his border officials in the dark in the process.

Ultimately, a phone call won't solve this crisis, and we don't need new immigration laws to solve the invasion at the southern border. Don't be fooled by the Democrats and the President calling for new legislation and resources. What we need is a President willing to enforce existing law and one who will prioritize the men and women who protect our borders over those crossing them illegally.

The main need for new legislation is to force the President to enforce existing laws and to complete the border wall. The House passed that legislation, the Secure the Border Act of 2023, almost 10 months ago, only to have it sit idly on the Senate side and be ignored.

WELCOMING FAT JOE TO THE STATE OF THE UNION

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

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my guest for the State of the Union. He is a leader in the fight to make healthcare more affordable and equitable.

Fat Joe is a Grammy-nominated artist, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. He is also a partner with Power to the Patients, to advocate for healthcare price transparency.

Confusing health information, language barriers, and lack of insurance are challenges that make our healthcare system difficult to navigate, especially for communities of color.

Because of high out-of-pocket costs, insured patients can still face enormous medical bills, and uninsured patients are more likely to face unnecessary hospital fees.

Healthcare is the only service where someone does not know the cost until after you purchase it, until after receiving the healthcare services. We must remove barriers that restrict families from getting care, including knowing your costs up front.

This builds upon the work of President Biden and House Democrats to put people over politics, to lower the cost of healthcare coverage and lower drug prices.

Fat Joe's work to highlight the need for price transparency is necessary to reduce healthcare costs for American families. I am proud to welcome him back to the Capitol as my guest.

FULL FUNDING FOR WIC

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to applaud and support the full funding of WIC in the fiscal year 2024 budget.

For 50 years, WIC has delivered quality nutrition benefits and breastfeeding support for almost 10 million American families, including almost 1 million pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children in California.

As chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, I hear stories every day of how essential WIC is to Latino families in America, with more than 6 million Latino women and children enrolled.

Last year, the Hispanic Caucus joined the Congressional Black Caucus and the Democratic Women's Caucus to send a letter to congressional leadership to urge them to fully fund WIC.

For months, House Republicans insisted on harmful funding cuts, which put women and children's health at risk. House Democrats worked tirelessly for a \$1 billion funding increase to meet the basic needs of the program.

This week, House Democrats were successful in our efforts. Moms and their babies and pregnant women who rely on WIC can breathe a sigh of relief. Their access to their benefits will continue.

House Democrats will continue to keep up the fight in Congress toward an America where no one goes hungry.

RECOGNIZING CARMEN TAPIO

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

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a leader from our district who has created jobs and changed lives, all while growing the largest African-American-owned business in the State of Nebraska and the largest private mixed-use development investment in North Omaha.

Carmen Tapio is currently the CEO of North End Teleservices, which has soared to the Inc. 5000 list of fastest growing companies for the last 4 years, injecting over \$306 million into Nebraska's economy.

She established Forever North Real Estate to help reimagine North Omaha and set it on a promising path where a community can work, live, and play. Her leadership is helping to reduce poverty, unemployment, and is changing the trajectory of families for generations to come.

Through developing the only Department of Labor registered apprenticeship in her industry, micro credentialing, and bringing people up through the organization, she is growing her own workforce and leadership.

Wanting to empower Black women across the State, Carmen ignited the formation of Nebraska Black Women United with a few phone calls, her own humble take on its formation. Today, over 800 women belong to the purpose-driven organization and continue to fan the flames of growth and support for Black women.

In addition, she founded the NET Work Spot, a premier coworking space nestled in the heart of the North Omaha community. The NET Work Spot exists for collaboration and to nurture the ingenuity of brilliant entrepreneurial minds.

Tapio lends her expertise by serving on various for-profit and nonprofit boards. She serves as the chair of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Omaha Zoological Society Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's Omaha Branch Board of Directors, and the Werner Enterprises Board of Directors as chair of the ESG Committee. She is a Peter Kiewit Foundation trustee and serves on the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Board of Trustees, the University of Nebraska Trustee Foundation, and the Nebraska Medicine Board's Finance Committee, just to name a few.

This Women's History Month, she was recognized by the Governor of Nebraska and the Nebraskaland Foundation as the 2024 Distinguished Nebraskalander. She is the 2023 Inspire Awards Woman of the Year, 2022 Inspire Woman of the Year for Large Business, and the 2022 USA Today Nebraska Woman of the Year. She is a 2022 Omaha Business Hall of Fame Inductee, received the 2022 Black Women Legacy Award, and a 2022 Better Business Bureau Torch Award. She was recognized in the Forbes 2021 Next 1000 and the 2021 Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Leadership Awards.

She is incredible.

Carmen's parents instilled in her and each of her five sisters that they could do anything they set their minds to. She says that foundation cultivated her strong belief in the human spirit and that anything is possible. This is what she endeavors to teach people as she and her organization work to help people create a vision for their lives to advance their economic independence and career path.

Carmen and her husband, Bob, live with their dog, Bella, and enjoy traveling and gardening together.

THE STATE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about America's number one antipoverty program for the elderly and America's number one antipoverty program for children. That, of course, is Social Security.

I want to commend President Biden. I commend him for putting forward the concept of making sure that Social Security is solvent into the next century and making sure that we expand benefits. He did so by saying we do something that is very common sense and practical: We lift the cap on people making over \$400,000.

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Most citizens probably don't realize that there is even a cap on Social Security.

Be that as it may, why is it that all individuals shouldn't have to pay into this system?

We have a poster here. God bless these wealthy individuals who are able to achieve great success and make vast sums of money, but why should a person making \$30,000, \$50,000, \$75,000, or \$100,000 pay throughout the year for their Social Security when these wealthy individuals will pay about 1 minute into the beginning of the year? Just last month was the last time that millionaires would pay anything into the system.

President Biden has said: Let's scrap the cap on people earning over \$400,000.

I have had many townhalls where I ask people in the audience to raise their hand if they are making over \$400,000. So far, I haven't seen a single hand go up.

Yet, they are exempt from participating in what is the Nation's number one insurance program for the elderly and also for children.

By the way, especially in this time of deficit talk, et cetera, it is completely paid for. This is a real kitchen-table issue because 10,000 baby boomers a day become eligible for Social Security, and they are sitting there asking: Well, why is it that Social Security hasn't been enhanced?

It is because the only body that can do that is the United States Congress, and it hasn't done anything since 1971 to enhance the program, Mr. Speaker, and to make sure that people are paying their fair share.

The fair thing to do here is to scrap the cap, which would extend solvency of Social Security instead of having a limit. It would also be able to provide benefits to people, including a COLA, that actually work on behalf of our senior citizens. It would include an across-the-board increase for everyone on Social Security since it hasn't been increased since 1971, and it would make sure that people who are currently paying taxes on their Social Security don't have to do so.

How are we able to do that? By having people pay their fair share, people who don't pay, in many instances, a penny into FICA. That is flatout wrong for the wealthiest nation in the world that has provided the benefits, freedoms, and liberty that has allowed these very successful people to succeed in the greatest country in the world.

It is time for us, Mr. Speaker, to come together and address this for all Americans as we seek to close the wealth gap that exists in this country.

For more than 40 percent, Mr. Speaker, of our fellow citizens, Social Security is the only benefit that they have. It is the only benefit that they have, and for these individuals to be exempt from having to pay into that system is absolutely wrong and unjust.

That is why, again, I commend President Biden for standing up for all

Americans and saying that we are going to scrap the cap. We are going to lift that cap on people making over \$400,000. It won't even be anything for them to do this.

What it will do is provide us the opportunity to expand Social Security, to make sure that Social Security now goes into effect by eliminating WEP and GPO that has wrongly penalized teachers, firefighters, police officers, their spouses, and their families from receiving the very Social Security benefits they deserve.

FAILURE TO SECURE BORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on his first day in office, Biden signed an executive order overturning every border security measure established during the Trump administration and paving the way for 11 million foreign nationals to enter our country illegally.

During the first 3 years of his administration, Joe Biden consistently denied the border security crisis. Biden lied. Biden and his staff falsely claimed that the border was secure.

It is only now, after countless lives have been taken, that the Biden administration has admitted that there is a problem because they put politics ahead of the safety of the American people.

The tragic murder of 22-year-old Georgia student Laken Riley is a direct consequence of Biden's failure to secure the border. The illegal immigrant from Venezuela who killed her should never have been allowed in our country.

I grieve for Laken's family on their tragic loss. I cannot imagine the pain. No parent in our country should ever lose a child due to reckless border policies and soft-on-crime policies. Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS have blood on their hands. They should say her name and apologize to her family.

The primary responsibility of the government is to protect the American people. Instead, Biden has opened our borders to an invasion of military-age men and put American lives in danger.

Today, we have the opportunity to vote for the Laken Riley Act to ensure that this never happens again.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

STATE OF THE UNION AND HOUSING

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

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, in less than 12 hours, President Biden will deliver his State of the Union Address