

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

and lay out his top policy priorities for our Nation.

Last week, I sent the White House a request that the national affordable housing and homelessness crisis be included as part of the State of the Union Address, and I was very pleased to hear this morning that housing will, in fact, be included in the address.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have a special guest. All the people of this country are my special guests today. I am speaking to them about this critical issue of housing and the need to take the people off the street.

Unfortunately, the homeless on the street and in tents and broken-down RVs will not hear this message tonight, but they expect their Members of Congress that they elect to office to speak up for them.

I speak for them, fight for them, and expect everybody, Democrats and Republicans, to fight for the people in America who are homeless and who are looking for better and decent housing.

While the Biden administration has helped our Nation achieve one of the strongest labor markets with record job creation and a record number of businesses forming, we simply cannot talk about the state of our Union without talking about the state of housing in this country.

Housing is a critical part of every person's well-being, the largest part of family budgets, and a major part of our economy. Yet, rising housing costs continue to make up nearly 70 percent of core inflation, outpacing modest wage gains.

To put it in plainer terms: Americans are making more money, but housing costs are so extreme that the extra money in their pockets still isn't enough. Indeed, more renters and homeowners are paying a greater share of their income on housing than ever before. Since 2020, home prices have skyrocketed by 47 percent. Rents have increased by 40 percent during that same timeframe.

It is no wonder that families in nearly every income bracket are feeling the pain of one of the worst housing and homelessness crises in our Nation's history.

Today, a record 653,100 people are experiencing homelessness nationwide as we saw a sobering 25 percent spike in the number of people who are experiencing homelessness for the first time in their lives, between 2022 and 2023.

I am talking about people we call our neighbors, family members, students, teachers, and frontline workers. Elderly Americans, who should be enjoying retirement, are one of the fastest rising groups of people experiencing homelessness.

This is simply unacceptable. While the state of our Nation's housing is bleak right now, this doesn't have to be our future. We know how to solve the housing crisis.

During the pandemic, Democrats secured unprecedented levels of housing relief through bills like the American

Rescue Plan Act, which promoted equitable economic recovery, spurred more development of affordable housing, and helped nearly 3 million people experiencing the risk of homelessness. Over 12 million people successfully avoided eviction or foreclosure thanks to these investments.

In short, Democrats proved what we can accomplish with substantial, targeted investments in housing, and we should use this as a blueprint to finally end this crisis.

During this Congress, however, people on the opposite side of the aisle, the Republicans, have tried to defund Federal housing programs and even passed a bill to make homeownership more, not less, expensive.

As the top Democrat on the House Financial Services Committee, I commit to press the fight in Congress to secure robust investments in fair and affordable housing.

I have introduced my groundbreaking housing bills, again, including the Housing Crisis Response Act, the Ending Homelessness Act, and the Down Payment Toward Equity Act. These bills would help create nearly 1.4 million affordable, accessible, and resilient homes and reduce housing costs, end homelessness, and revive the dream of homeownership for all.

I am looking forward to hearing President Biden's State of the Union Address, and I hope that housing is highlighted as a major policy and not just a passing mention.

Mr. Speaker, you are going to hear a lot about housing. I am not going to give up on housing. I am going to speak to every Member of Congress about voting for housing to end this crisis.

NO ARMY MONEY TO UKRAINE

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

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, I was so furious, but not surprised, when I saw the Bloomberg News report that the Biden administration is now considering draining \$200 million out of Army reserves to send more money to Ukraine.

The move would target reserve funds that this House has authorized and appropriated for this particular purpose, a purpose that is worthy, certainly more worthy than continuing involvement in the conflict in Ukraine that could lead to a tragic escalatory accident.

I can't even believe this is a controversial view to take on this floor, but I believe that the U.S. Army reserves should actually be for the U.S. Army.

By the way, it is not as if we don't have needs for our Army. How about the families of our soldiers?

Right now, childcare is a real problem. We have Army soldiers who are driving 1½ hours or more each way just to drop off their kids at childcare. We could invest that money in our military families.

Mr. Speaker, I could take you to the Army town of Crestview, Florida, in my district, where the school counselors are still helping Army families deal with the lingering effects of deployment after deployment after deployment. They could use more resources. They tell me: Congressman, if we had more resources for these Army families, they could improve quality of life and improve mental health.

Not for nothing, but the Army was taking a leading role in hypersonics for our country. We have fallen behind China. If we have an extra \$200 million laying around the Army, how about we invest in making sure that, with hypersonic weapons, we can hit a moving target—I don't know—like China can? Instead, we see this attempt to drain resources away for Ukraine.

When Joe Biden talked about campaigning for the soul of the Nation, I just assumed it was our Nation and not Ukraine.

Moreover, Ukraine is no Garden of Eden for democracy. Senator LEE pointed out in a report that the CIA had to directly confront Zelenskyy about his own personal corruption.

In Ukraine, they have canceled the Presidential elections. Call me old-fashioned, Mr. Speaker, but I actually prefer democracies that hold elections rather than canceling elections.

While there were many concerns about the death of Navalny, appropriately, people forget the fact that Zelenskyy jailed a journalist, Gonzalo Lira, and that journalist died in a Ukrainian prison.

□ 1100

Tonight, you will hear President Biden come into this House, and the one thing that President Biden has in common with the American people is that both were far better off four years ago, Joe Biden physically, and the rest of us economically.

Now, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I will call for an investigation of any efforts to drain U.S. reserves to fund the war in Ukraine, and I would invite my fellow members of the Armed Services Committee to join me.

What this reminded me of is when all the Democrats were crying alligator tears about President Trump using DOD money to fund the wall. My colleagues may accuse me of hypocrisy now because I supported President Trump in that endeavor, but I don't like the Biden administration going beyond what we set forth with our Article I powers.

However, at least if I am being a hypocrite, I was doing so for the defense of America's borders and America's interests to stop an invasion that is killing hundreds of thousands of people through the introduction of fentanyl and an invasion that is diminishing the economic prospects of working people in this country.

When my Democratic colleagues are hypocrites, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues