

Energy prices now cost Americans over \$3,000 more each year than when Joe Biden first took office.

It is clear that the President's failed policies are to blame for the skyrocketing cost of gas, oil, and electricity. It is time to rein in these runaway prices by returning to the energy that is underneath the feet of my constituents.

#### COMMUNITY FUNDING PROJECTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. NICKEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NICKEL. Madam Speaker, on Saturday, President Biden signed a government funding package into law. This bipartisan slate of bills will make meaningful investments in Federal programs that North Carolinians rely on. It will help lower the cost of living, create good-paying jobs, and grow our local economy.

I am particularly proud to have secured over \$14 million in Federal funds for 15 community-supported projects throughout North Carolina's 13th District. This will go a long way in getting local priorities moving, and I am proud to have gotten this funding across the finish line.

For transportation infrastructure, I secured nearly \$1.8 million for two different projects. This funding will help GoTriangle purchase 16 zero-emission vehicles and will also allow the city of Raleigh to make streetscape improvements to enhance connectivity and public safety on Tarboro Road.

For economic development, I secured \$2.2 million for three different projects. This funding will help the I-95/I-40 Crossroads of America Economic Development Alliance complete an advanced manufacturing and biotech training center, getting North Carolinians back to work. It will help the city of Goldsboro to demolish and dispose of the Herman Park building, which was closed due to contamination issues and safety concerns. It will help the town of Garner with the partial removal of a deteriorated dam and facilitate a lake and stream restoration improvement project at Meadowbrook Park.

For water infrastructure, I secured nearly \$7.3 million for six different projects. This funding will help the city of Raleigh to install stormwater infrastructure within the Cottages of Idlewild Affordable Housing Project and bring the project closer to completion. It will help the town of Apex to complete a sewer interceptor project, which will improve service delivery and reduce maintenance costs for public utilities.

It will allow the town of Benson to make pipe repairs and water system upgrades as part of its water system improvement plan. It will help the town of Cary to improve stormwater management and water quality in the Walnut Creek watershed. It will help

the town of Fuquay-Varina purchase a new 1-million-gallon elevated water storage tank to improve water quality, quantity, and pressure. It will help the town of Holly Springs to make water infrastructure improvements, specifically a water conveyance system that is so needed in the region.

For public safety, I secured \$1.3 million for three different projects. This funding will help Wake County purchase body-worn cameras, radars, and other technology upgrades for the Wake County Sheriff's Office. It will help the town of Smithfield to purchase body cameras and more data storage resources. It will help the town of Selma purchase police equipment and make technology upgrades. In the fight for justice, body cameras aren't just accessories; they are tools of accountability.

For agriculture, I secured nearly \$1.5 million for North Carolina State University to continue corn and soybean research at the Central Crops Research Station in Clayton.

Madam Speaker, I came to Congress to get things done. This funding will alleviate the burden and expense on our local cities and towns and get these projects closer to the finish line by putting our Federal dollars to good use in North Carolina. I am going to continue to work across the aisle to find solutions and deliver for the people of North Carolina's 13th District.

#### RECOGNIZING JAYLENE EVERHART

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jaylene Everhart of Centre County, Pennsylvania. I had the privilege of meeting with Jaylene last week while she was in Washington, D.C., for the national Agriculture's Promise forum.

Jaylene is a junior at State College Area High School and currently representing Pennsylvania for the National Young Farmers Education Association. Her passion for agriculture started at a young age as she grew up going to her grandparents' farm for chores before heading to school.

As a member of the Little Lions FFA Chapter and 4-H, she advocates for agricultural education on a wider level, encouraging educators to include agricultural education in classrooms.

In December, Jaylene was one of two high school students from Pennsylvania selected to compete at the National Young Farmers Education Association Institute and Agriculture Communications competition in College Station, Texas, at Texas A&M University.

The association works with local FFA chapters and 4-H organizations to help raise the next generation of agricultural leaders and advocates.

During the event, Jaylene attended educational tours to learn about the

variety of agricultural opportunities and what Texas agriculture is all about and competed in a variety of agriculture advocacy and communication competitions against college- and high-school-age students from across the country.

Jaylene placed first in the Agriculture Expressions contest, which consisted of a 500-word essay on a current agricultural topic, a personal biography, and a release statement for publication. She also participated in the Agriculture Communications contest, where she created social media posts, radio, TV, and newsprint submissions throughout the week to exemplify the impact and education of the institute.

Madam Speaker, as chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, I take great pride in meeting with our next generation of agricultural leaders. Jaylene has an incredibly bright future ahead of her, and she is an inspiration to other young farmers looking to get involved with the industry.

Without students like Jaylene, who have such a passion for the agricultural field, we risk our future food supply. I am also looking for ways to lift the voices of her generation in Congress and encourage our next agricultural leaders. We must encourage their participation in the agriculture industry.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Jaylene on her accomplishments. They are truly outstanding. She is a talented young lady, and I look forward to seeing all that she will accomplish for the agricultural community and beyond.

#### TIJUANA RIVER POLLUTION NEAR SAN DIEGO

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

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I rise once again to address what could very well be one of the greatest ongoing environmental disasters in the United States. I am referring to the billions of gallons of raw sewage, industrial waste, and other pollutants that flow down the Tijuana River and into San Diego's coastal waters.

These flows sicken our communities, shutter our local businesses, harm our tourism industry, endanger wildlife, and threaten our servicemembers and Border Patrol agents stationed in San Diego.

Just last month, researchers at San Diego State University released a report that shows that this pollution also poses a massive public health threat. The studies they cite reveal extremely troubling findings, like the fact that cancer-causing chemicals banned in the United States decades ago, including DDT and PCBs, have been found in the soil.

Waterborne contaminants include viruses like SARS-CoV-2, salmonella, listeria, hep B and C, and pathogens carrying antibiotic-resistant genes.

The report cites a recent study of bottlenose dolphins that had become stranded and died in San Diego waters. The dolphins died from sepsis caused by water contaminated by feces. This is the same water our troops train in and our kids swim and surf in.

Avoiding the water alone will not make you safe. Air quality monitors that were recently installed in the region have confirmed what residents have known for years, that the air itself is also polluted. Sewage that washes up on land dries, sending dangerous levels of hydrogen sulfide into the air around people's homes.

The solution is simple. The United States owns and operates a wastewater treatment plant on our side of the border that has not been maintained. It is in desperate need of repair and expansion to handle the flows. President Biden included \$310 million in his supplemental funding request that would make those repairs and upgrades possible. This is a small price to pay for the health of our community, our brave servicemembers, and our environment.

Many of the communities hit hardest by this pollution are low-income communities of color. I can't help but think if this was happening somewhere that wasn't 3,000 miles from here, like the Chesapeake Bay or even the Great Lakes, it would have been taken care of long ago.

We know that Mexico must also do its part. Much of their infrastructure has also fallen into disrepair. The good news is that Mexico is bound by a treaty we signed in San Diego in 2022 to spend nearly \$150 million to fix their treatment plant.

Mexico, to its credit, has made great strides in the last year. They have repaired and replaced key infrastructure, like sewage pipes that redirect the contaminated water, and they have broken ground on a new wastewater treatment plant.

Madam Speaker, this is a public health, business, and national security disaster. The more we delay in addressing cross-border pollution, the more costly and difficult it will be to fix. I urge my colleagues to support this funding and ask that congressional leadership and appropriators include this funding in any upcoming spending package.

#### HONORING TEXAS RANGER ROBERT "BRANDON" BESS

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

Mr. BABIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the distinguished career of a longtime Texas lawman, constituent, and good friend, Texas Ranger Robert "Brandon" Bess.

On February 29, 2024, he hung up his signature Stetson cowboy hat, and he unpinned the legendary Texas Rangers cinco-peso badge for the last time.

□ 1030

Brandon is a native of Kirbyville, Texas, and graduated from Kirbyville High School in 1990. He earned a degree in criminal justice from Kilgore College before attending East Texas Police Academy. After he graduated from the academy, he served as a patrolman for the Henderson Police Department and as a deputy in the Rusk County Sheriff's Office.

In 1995, Brandon joined the Texas Department of Public Safety where he served as a highway patrol trooper from 1995 to 2005 and as a sergeant and special agent in criminal intelligence from 2005 to 2013.

In July 2013, he joined the prestigious Texas Rangers, the oldest law enforcement organization on the North American Continent with statewide jurisdiction. Since April 2021, he has served as the Unsolved Crimes Investigation Program Ranger, "cold case," for Texas Ranger Company A, encompassing 35 southeast Texas counties, where he has done a marvelous job.

Brandon worked on countless criminal investigations throughout the Lone Star State for the ranger division during his distinguished career. He perfected the use of DNA tracing and other cutting-edge technologies to bring multiple criminals to justice finally, often many years after the case was considered cold. It has been a great privilege to assist him in cutting through the Federal bureaucracy for several of those cases.

Brandon married his wife, Mary Beth, on March 13, 1999. Together they share children, Marshall, Walker, and Mattie. The Bess family are active members of Anahuac Methodist Church, where Brandon has served as a Sunday school teacher, on multiple committees, and currently chairs the church's board of stewards. Additionally, he is a cancer survivor and a veteran of the United States Army Reserve and the Texas Army National Guard.

Madam Speaker, in its 200-year history, only the very finest law enforcement officers have had the great honor of calling themselves Texas Rangers. I am proud that Ranger Brandon Bess is among them.

I wish him, Mary Beth, and their family the very best in the next chapter of their lives, and I look forward to working with him in the future as well.

#### SUPPORTING UKRAINE

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

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, as a member of the Subcommittee on National Security, I rise in strong support of our international ally, Ukraine, and the more than 37 million Ukrainians who remain determined to defend their independence in the face of more than 2 years of state-sponsored terrorism at the hands of Vladimir Putin's Russia.

In submitting his annual budget request to Congress just yesterday, President Biden again appealed for immediate emergency funding for Ukraine—a request the administration first made back in October of 2023. According to the President, absent congressional action on this emergency request, the United States will not be able to continue to provide support to Ukraine to meet their battlefield needs as they defend against Russian attacks each and every day.

Ukrainian armed forces are already enduring the direct impact of this congressional impasse on Ukraine aid. While Russia is dropping guided bombs on Ukraine's positions and firing 10,000 artillery shells per day, Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines have been left to ration munitions and other critical supplies.

It is not surprising that the past several weeks have witnessed the fall of the strategic Ukrainian city of Avdiivka and additional Russian advances in eastern Ukraine. Only through their steadfast will and courage have the Ukrainian people been able to effectively resist the brutal Russian onslaught.

Beyond the battlefield, the United Nations and the World Bank recently estimated that the total cost of reconstruction in Ukraine and recovery after 2 years of war now stands at almost \$500 billion.

Russian attacks against Ukrainian civilian population centers have caused devastation and loss of life and damage across several critical areas, including the housing, energy, and transportation sectors. Moreover, nearly 40 percent of the Ukrainian population, or almost 15 million people, are in dire need of basic humanitarian assistance.

Last month, the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan national security funding bill that includes more than \$62 billion in security and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine. Inexplicably, the House Republican leadership has refused to consider this legislation, even though I believe the majority of Members have indicated that they would vote for it.

The House Republican leadership is also sitting on bipartisan legislation that would provide President Biden with the authority to confiscate and transfer frozen Russian Central Bank assets to Ukraine for its reconstruction. The bill would also establish an international framework to facilitate the transfer of Russian assets frozen in other Western countries. In total, \$300 billion worth of foreign holdings that Russia stashed across the globe could immediately be diverted to support the Ukrainian people.

Importantly, President Biden and his administration have already expressed support for this transfer of funding. As underscored by Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen's statement to the G20 world leaders last month: "This would be a decisive response to Russia's unprecedented threat to global stability."