

have failed to initiate salutary legislative efforts to reduce the deficit. Unfortunately, they were successful in paving the way for legislative efforts to cut federal worker's pay and benefits and in imposing budget caps that impacted appropriations for essential federal services. They did not lead to more equitable approaches to deficit reduction that balance program cuts with higher taxes for the wealthy.

We urge you to consider alternative legislation that can secure programs like Social Security and Medicare for the future while also improving affordability for seniors and working people. For instance, supporting legislation to extend Medicare's negotiation of lower drug prices for seniors and extending these savings to all working people. In addition, we encourage you to support Ranking Member Boyle's Medicare and Social Security Fair Share Act (H.R. 4535), which would ensure those earning more than \$400,000 pay their fair share in taxes to extend the sufficiency of the Social Security trust fund and Medicare.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose the legislation that will be considered in tomorrow's mark up and to help advance the many bills already introduced that manage to simultaneously reduce the deficit and inequality.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM SAMUEL,
Director, Government Affairs.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I think it is vitally important that Members understand what is being proposed and how it totally relies on no Member of this body other than the select few, Mr. Speaker, who will be chosen.

The commission is comprised of 16 individuals, 4 who are outside experts and not part of this body. The Senate will have six Members that they choose, three Republicans, three Democrats; the House three Democrats, three Republicans.

In a body of 435 people here, 3 Democrats and 3 Republicans will decide the future and fate of Social Security and Medicare. It is interesting. They will do so behind closed doors, with no obligation to report in public. Interestingly enough, too, the bill calls for them to form the committee, but they don't have to report back until after the election during a lameduck session.

Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. The committees of cognizance here that deal with these issues will have no relevance.

The only thing that will matter is an up-or-down vote decided by these individuals behind closed doors that is unamendable and comes to this floor for an up-or-down vote. This is outrageous, and it is wrong.

There are several remedies and proposals that exist out there for Social Security. This is what is so vitally important.

Close to 70 million Americans depend on Social Security, and Social Security doesn't create one penny of debt. It is a program that is fully paid for that cannot be borrowed from and has to be actuarially sound. Yet it is thrown in here by a desire by some to use a clandestine, subterranean, double-secret probation committee to cut benefits from Americans.

Adding insult to injury, the last time Congress enhanced the benefits for Social Security, Richard Nixon was President. That is more than 53 years ago now that Congress took some action to enhance benefits for people.

Mr. Speaker, 10,000 baby boomers per day become eligible for Social Security. More than 5 million of our fellow Americans get below-poverty-level checks, having worked all their lives and paid into the system.

What we need is a vote on Social Security. Put both measures side by side: a proposal to do a double-secret probation study committee versus actual legislation to improve and enhance Social Security for the more than 70 million Americans who will be participating.

Every single Member of Congress has Social Security recipients. We have sent you the exact number for your district. Imagine not having any increases in more than 53 years, for 40 percent of all Americans. In a Nation of more than 300 million people, for minimally 28 million Americans, this is the only thing they have for retirement. As everyone in this body knows, it is not just simply retirement. It is also spousal and dependent coverage. For military veterans especially, it is also for disability. This body has not done anything, nor the Senate, in 53 years.

All this study is, is kicking the can down the road and creating further problems. Oppose this legislation.

CELEBRATING THE SERVICE OF CHRISTINE HILL

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the service of one of our staffers on the VA Committee.

Ms. Christine Hill has dedicated decades of her career to this Nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

She got her start in Congress as a military legislative assistant for Elizabeth Dole before being appointed and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the VA Assistant Secretary for congressional and legislative affairs in the Bush administration.

Christine then went on to advocate for veterans in the VSO world until we were able to bring her here to the committee where she has served as the Subcommittee on Health staff director for over 10 years.

Christine has helped advance dozens of bills supporting veterans and their families, most notably: giving veterans greater control over the healthcare that works for them through the Choice and the VA MISSION Acts, expanding mental health care and support through the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, fighting for toxic-exposed veterans to get them the healthcare and benefits they have earned through the PACT Act, and so

many other landmark pieces of legislation.

It is important to note that she only began her impressive civilian career after a full 20-year career in the United States Air Force. Christine's entire life is marked by service, and she, without question, represents the best that America has to offer.

A graduate of the Air Force Academy, Christine held numerous positions as a KC-135 navigator, flying combat support during Desert Storm. Christine was handpicked to become the first woman assigned to fly the B-1B bomber and concluded her military career at the Pentagon, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

You would never guess any of these things about Christine. She is one of the kindest, most humble people I have ever met, and she has been an absolute pleasure to work with during my time leading this committee. She is a dear friend of mine, and she will be sorely missed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Christine. I want her to have a wonderful life in the things she pursues from here on out. This Nation thanks her for the job she has done both in the military and for this institution.

COMMEMORATING 103 DAYS SINCE THE OCTOBER 7 ATTACK BY HAMAS

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, last night, I joined Members on both sides of the aisle for a candlelight vigil to mark 103 days since October 7; 103 days since Hamas tore through Israeli communities leaving slaughter, rape, and destruction in their wake; 103 days since these terrorists took hundreds of Israelis and Americans hostage; and sadly, Mr. Speaker, 103 days of inaction by this Congress.

I believe the sentiments and prayers our Members shared at the vigil are genuine. Indeed, the vast majority of this Congress wants to aid Israel as well as Ukraine, but our actions—rather, I should say, inaction—believe our words.

The far right has prevented this Congress from delivering the resources necessary to give our rhetoric meaning and impact. Hollow words, empty threats, and unfulfilled promises are poor substitutes for military hardware, munitions, and humanitarian relief.

From partisan IRS cuts to a complete overhaul of our immigration system, Republican leadership has made supplemental aid to our allies contingent on completely unrelated issues.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the Speaker of this House, Mr. JOHNSON, sponsored a bill just a few years ago that said only one subject per bill because he didn't want to be forced to vote for something that he liked at the same time he voted for something he didn't like. From partisan IRS cuts to

immigration, the effort to unnecessarily complicate this aid is ironic considering that bill was called the One Subject at a Time Act.

Mr. Speaker, there is one subject that ought to be at the top of our minds right now: the defense of democracy. Every moment we fail to act disheartens our allies and emboldens the enemies of freedom.

Hamas doesn't have to question its allies' commitment to their cause. The Houthis have made their devotion clear, as have Iran, Hezbollah, and other Iranian proxies.

Putin knows he has the backing of the new axis of evil, as well. North Korea supplies him with artillery shells and ballistic missiles that rain down on Ukrainian civilians. Iran sends him suicide drones that buzz over trenches and through city streets across Ukraine.

Iran gives those same weapons to Hamas and its other proxies to use against the people of Israel.

We, on the other hand, are sowing doubt daily for our allies and for our enemies.

At least 132 Israeli and American hostages remain in Gaza awaiting rescue. Innocent Palestinians await our humanitarian aid as Hamas continues to use them as human shields.

In Ukraine, our allies scavenge the husks of burnt-out Russian tanks for spare parts. Ukrainian commanders are forced to ration ammunition. Artillery crews wait days for resupply, and when it finally comes, they can often count the number of shells on one hand.

Has the wellspring of freedom run dry? We must answer them now. Our answer must be a resounding no. Our actions now will be our only reply that is heard. The strong words of yesterday will be drowned out by the thunder of inaction today.

America, a beacon of freedom and democracy, stands inactive in the light of Putin's criminal aggression and Hamas' terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, let us come together and let us act. There are over 300 votes in this House for Ukraine. There are over 400 votes in this House for Israel and for humanitarian relief. Let us not stand silent, inept, inactive, unable to help those who are on freedom's front line this very hour.

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PERRY STRONG

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

Mr. NUNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart, just 2 weeks after the horrific violence that ripped through the small town of Perry, Iowa.

On the morning of Thursday, January 4, students woke up and returned to school after their winter break. They did not know what that day would entail. Before school had started, some students arrived for a break-

fast program just before 8:00 a.m., and reports of shots rang throughout the school. Law enforcement rushed to Perry High School.

The violence that day left four students wounded, the death of sixth grader Ahmir Jolliff, and now, most recently, the life of Perry High School Principal Dan Marburger. The Butler family also lost their son that day.

Like many Iowans, when I first heard the news, I was angry. No parent, no child, no teacher should ever have to wonder if it is safe to be able to go to school. We have a duty, a sacred oath, to protect our children, our families, and our educators.

In addition, no family and no parent should ever have to feel the pain that Ahmir's mother, Erica, felt that day when she learned that her 11-year-old son, Mr. Smiley, had been shot and killed simply for going to school.

Ahmir was an incredible kid. His mother shares that he loved soccer, played the tuba, and sang in a choir. Most importantly, that day, he got up excited to go back to school because he wanted to see his friends and his teachers.

This past weekend, this horrible attack claimed another life, Principal Dan Marburger. The multiple injuries Dan sustained were a result of his truly heroic effort to save his students. Dan was a loving father, a grandfather, a husband, a son, and a great educator.

He worked in the Perry School District since 1995, but when Dan heard the danger happening in his school, when others fled, when he could have run to save his immediate staff, he swarmed toward the danger, and there is no doubt that his actions saved lives.

Perhaps no one could share the story of Principal Marburger better than his own daughter, Claire, who said: As many of you know, Dad is a gentle giant, an amazing dad, just an amazing person. When I heard of a gunman, I instantly had a feeling my dad would be a victim, as he would put himself in harm's way for the benefit of kids and his staff. It is absolutely zero surprise to hear that he tried to approach and talk Dylan down and distract him long enough for some students to get out of the cafeteria, because that is just Dad.

There is no doubt he saved many lives through his selfless action. His legacy will live on through many students that he both mentored and educated, and his sacrifice will never be forgotten—not in Iowa, not in America.

Today, while our hearts mourn over this tragedy, we will be there for our community.

In the evening and days that followed the violence, we heard of students who helped each other get to safety. We learned the story of a kind stranger who drove an injured student, fleeing from the school riddled with bullets, to a hospital to help get treatment.

Going forward, we learned of law enforcement who were able to be on the scene within minutes, helping to protect even more students and securing

the school quickly. We learned of doctors, nurses, medical professionals, and an incredible Life Flight crew who landed on the Perry High School football field to shuttle those casualties and those wounded to trauma centers across the State from this rural community. We learned of all who worked tirelessly to help those who were injured. We also heard the stories of vigils and community gatherings in the days that followed the shooting.

As we continue to move forward, now is the time for healing, a time to ensure that our communities are safe, our kids feel confident to return to class, and that families and educators know that Iowa has their backs.

We all have a responsibility to ensure safety for our students, and that begins with mental health, preventing youth suicide, hardening our schools, and ensuring our law enforcement and our schools are prepared to respond when these violent acts occur. Together, we have led on this, but there is more work to be done.

From this tragedy, there are lessons learned. These lifesaving actions that took place at Perry High School must be shared across the country, and I ask all of my colleagues to join with me in learning from this horrible event so that we can save lives into the future.

Mr. Speaker, these are hard days ahead of us, and much work remains to be done, but we will get through this together, because, today, we are all Perry strong.

DIABETIC SHOES

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, as I face the last 50 weeks as a Member of this Congress, I am appalled at the amount of time we waste on performances on things that will never become law, that shouldn't become law, and, in fact, the American public doesn't care that much about.

However, yesterday, the front page of The New York Times was something that people should care about, talking about the problem of diabetes and the complications that can lead to amputations, especially among men.

It is no secret we are facing an epidemic of diabetes. Nearly 15 percent of American adults, more than 38 million people, have diabetes, and it is even worse among Americans 65 years or older, with a rate of nearly 30 percent. It is the eighth leading cause of death in the United States.

Right now, we are marking up a commission to deal with the budget deficit in our Budget Committee. The direct and indirect costs of diabetes alone in 2022 were \$413 billion, and the extra costs for a diabetes patient were more than \$12,000 per patient.

We should make improvements in delivery that prevent the disease and the progression, not only for the health of