

promoted utterly false narratives, most notably the Russian collusion hoax.

Courts have recently found the government guilty of violating the First Amendment by actively pressuring social media platforms to censor the very political dialogue that is central to the functioning of a democracy. The President even attempted to establish a disinformation czar to decide what information could reach voters.

Our fundamental democratic institutions are also under growing attack. The left has been very clear that it intends to pack the Supreme Court by creating new seats for leftist appointments and to pack the Senate by creating overwhelmingly Democratic States, like Washington, D.C.

Less than 2 years ago, leftist mobs descended on the homes of Supreme Court Justices in an illegal attempt to pressure and intimidate them, yet Mr. Biden's Department of Justice refused to enforce the law that protects jurists from such bullying.

The President has opened our borders and produced an illegal mass migration unprecedented in our history while his party has pushed to permit foreign nationals to vote in our elections, making a mockery of Americans' right to self-determination.

How does Mr. Biden explain the unprecedented acts of his agents seeking to ban from the ballot candidates who directly challenge his candidacy? It is not just the brazen and unconstitutional attempt to keep his leading Republican challenger from the ballot. The agents of his party have been aggressively working to ban Democratic primary challengers as well and seizing from Democratic voters in Iowa the right to have any meaningful say in next week's election, for fear they would not vote for him in sufficient numbers.

Mr. Speaker, our democracy is indeed under attack from the lunatic fringe on both extremes. When we ask which presents a clear and present danger to our democracy, I would respectfully but earnestly suggest the President remove the log from his own eye before he criticizes the speck in his neighbor's.

HONORING KEN SMITH

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

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to honor the extraordinary career of Ken Smith, who at one time was from Delaware and then Virginia and now makes his home in Florida.

A long time ago, in the faraway land of Delaware, Ken was a young policy assistant to Governor Pete du Pont, after serving as a staff aide during the Nixon administration. His career in education had started in 1973 when President Nixon appointed him vice chairman of the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children.

Governor du Pont and Ken made the startling discovery that there was enormous economic, social, and cultural potential residing in adults who had dropped out of high school but were never realized because of educational and career blockages. These were smart kids, but kids who, for whatever reason, had to quit school and go to work.

With the Governor's blessing and leadership, Ken created Jobs for Delaware's Graduates, a model program for intervening with the young women and men most likely to drop out, saving them not just to get them to graduation but to land them in good jobs or at least postsecondary education.

Jobs for Delaware's Graduates worked so well, Governor du Pont shared its success with Republican and Democratic Governors across the country, and many created their own programs. Vice President Walter Mondale was so impressed, he asked them to replicate it across the country. They needed a national leader, and Ken Smith was chosen to be the first—and for more than 40 years the only—CEO and President of Jobs for America's Graduates.

Jobs for America's Graduates launched in four States, including Virginia, and was bipartisan from the very start. Ken wisely cultivated Governor after Governor from both parties to grow the programs in their States, knowing that this was the most secure path to sustained economic growth and to overcome the poverty that cursed our least educated.

Today, Jobs for America's Graduates is helping 75,000 young people per year in over 1,450 high schools, middle schools, and out-of-school programs in more than 40 States.

I had the great privilege of chairing Jobs for Virginia's Graduates for 14 years, always bipartisan. It is now led by the Honorable Eileen Filler-Corn, the first woman speaker in the Virginia House. JVG is serving the kids with barriers to success in over 50 Virginia high schools today.

Ken Smith wisely created a national board to oversee the growth of this most successful high school dropout prevention program. The board chair is always a Governor, and it alternates between a Democratic and Republican every year. We are honored to have Governor Kim Reynolds of Iowa chair the board this year. She succeeded Governor John Bel Edwards last year. A fun fact is that the Jobs for America's Graduates board has more Governors than any other board, including the National Governors Association.

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Ken's leadership and advocacy over 40 years has inspired many highlights, from Governor George Bush installing the program in every high school in El Paso, to Governor Mike Pence expanding all throughout Indiana. Our own Virginia Governor, Chuck Robb, served as national chairman; and our current

Governor, Glenn Youngkin, has kept this commitment in his budget.

Remarkably, with Ken Smith at the helm, over 1,400,000 young men and women have graduated from high school, exceeding expectations they and their families had rarely hoped for.

In more than 40 years, Jobs for America's Graduates has never had a graduation rate below 90 percent, and today, the current graduation rate is above 95 percent.

Throughout his career, Ken has been appointed by multiple Presidents to serve as an education adviser given his deep connection and commitment to helping youth.

Thanks to Ken could not be given without saying thank you to his family, of course, who supported him throughout his career. Nora, his wife; Tara and Jennifer, his daughters; and most recently, his two granddaughters continue to support his work.

I have known many good human beings in my life. I get to serve in this House, where the great majority of us, Democrats and Republicans, serve because we are trying to make the world and America a better place. I have almost never met a man who has had as great a lifetime impact on far more than 1 million young people than Ken Smith. He has given his life to others and changed those lives with his love, hard work, and his courage.

Ken Smith, in your deserved pretend retirement, I salute you and thank you for your inspiration and your service.

REGAINING OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF OUR BORDER

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

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I visited the southern border last week in Eagle Pass, Texas, to see the situation at our border firsthand and to hear from Border Patrol, landowners, judges, and community members on how this is impacting them.

This was my fourth border visit since I have been in Congress. The crisis at our border is worse than ever.

Just last month, CBP reported 302,000 illegal crossings. That is enough people to fill out the Anaheim Angel Stadium nearly seven times over, just from one month.

I heard from Border Patrol who said they are spreading themselves thin as we see more crossings. They have become caretakers instead of devoting their time to handling the backlog of illegal migrants or working to protect our border.

The border facilities are expensive. In fact, the Del Rio and Eagle Pass facilities alone cost \$25 million to maintain every month. This doesn't include the salaries of Border Patrol agents.

I heard from county leaders who said that every week they perform autopsies on dead migrants found at the border. The price that both migrants and our communities pay is staggering.

Meanwhile, we have some reports of the Biden administration storing unused physical barriers and technologies at taxpayers' expense that could be used to help secure our border.

The numbers are startling, and the stories are heartbreaking. As a mother, grandmother, and immigrant who came here legally as a young girl, seeing these migrants being exploited by cartels breaks my heart.

Let me be clear, there is nothing fair, humane, or compassionate about the Biden administration's border policies. In fact, the Biden administration and DHS Secretary Mayorkas' open border policies have only emboldened cartels, giving them \$32 million a week profit. While cartels line their pockets and funnel fentanyl into our streets and our schools, Americans are endangered, and our Border Patrol is overworked and overwhelmed.

Sadly, this has undermined the legal immigration process and all those who have been waiting and playing by the rules.

This year, marks 100 years of the U.S. Border Patrol. Let's do right by these brave men and women who have dangerous and demanding jobs and give them the tools they need to protect us.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced a bipartisan border strategy bill to gain operational control of our southern border, and I am committed to do my part in being part of the solution here. The Biden administration must come to the table and do the same.

THANKING MIKE MARKUS FOR HIS DEDICATION
TO THE WATER DISTRICT

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank the Orange County Water District general manager, Mike Markus, for his dedicated service to the water district and to ensuring access to clean water for our Orange County communities and residents.

During his impressive 35-year career, Mike managed the implementation of the Groundwater Replenishment System program, which has become the largest potable reuse project in the world with a capacity to hold enough water for 1 million people.

Mike has received many notable and well-deserved awards for his work, including most recently the USC Sonny Astani Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award.

He has been a great resource to me and my office and I appreciate his partnership in supporting our communities. It has been a great privilege to work with his son, Dan, who is the staff director on the House Foreign Affairs Indo-Pacific Subcommittee.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mike for everything, and I wish him a very wonderful and successful retirement.

SOCIAL SECURITY: A PROMISE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I wish my constituents back home in the 21st Congressional District and Americans throughout the country a very happy new year. May it bring us good tidings and health, and may the Congress come together to solve some of the critical problems that we are facing in our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, nearly 83 years ago, the first Social Security check went out. Beginning as a promise for future generations of America, it was an attempt to create a safety net; and it has. Social Security is the major source of income for the majority of people over the age of 65; that accounts for over 70 million Americans.

In my 21st Congressional District, located in California's San Joaquin Valley, nearly 88,000 people depend upon this program for their basic needs: for food, for rent, for groceries. It is critical therefore that we address the issues involving Social Security.

A lot has changed in our country since it was first enacted in the 1930s during the Great Depression. Americans today, those who are receiving, and those who hope to receive Social Security, fear that the future of this vital program and their benefits are at risk, and they should be.

Why? Well, the long-term financial integrity of Social Security is not sustainable, and therefore, we have to fix it.

Instead of fixing Social Security, many of my extreme MAGA Republicans are focused on gutting the program and cutting vital benefits. That is wrong.

Under the leadership of my good friend Congressman JOHN LARSON, House Democrats have put forth a plan of action to secure and expand the benefits of Social Security. The Social Security Act of 2100: A Sacred Trust Act permanently improves Social Security's long-term health by extending the trust fund's solvency, which is critical, without any increase in taxes on the middle class. Let me repeat that: without any increase in taxes on the middle class.

It also repeals the bureaucratic rules, like the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset that prevents law enforcement officers, firefighters, and their families from receiving full benefits. They should receive full benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud cosponsor of this bill because Congress must uphold its promise to all seniors so they can retire with respect and dignity.

What are we talking about? We are talking about America's safety net. American seniors and future generations deserve better. We owe it to them who have spent their entire lives contributing to make their country a better place to live and who are counting on Social Security in their golden years.

Our country needs a roadmap to protect Social Security for generations to come, and this bill will do just that. I

remain committed to upholding the sacred trust that was made many years ago, working together with Republicans and Democrats for all Americans to fix the solvency of our Social Security system.

SECURING OUR BORDER

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the challenges we face at the border and immigration in America. We must fix this broken immigration system. We had an opportunity in 2013, and Republicans and Democrats must come together to protect our border, to protect it from human trafficking and from the movement of illicit drugs.

With commonsense action, I believe we can come together to do this. I will continue to work with my colleagues so that we can fix our broken immigration system and secure our border. That is what needs to be done.

HONORING THE LATE SERGEANT JUAN ERIC CANTU

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

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an incredible man and former constituent, the late Sergeant Juan Eric Cantu.

Sergeant Cantu honorably served our Nation as a member of the U.S. Army during the war in Vietnam with the 228th Aviation Battalion associated with the 1st Cavalry Division. He deployed to Vietnam from 1966 to 1968 and was a tail gunner on a Chinook helicopter and a fixed rotor mechanic.

He served as commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars, president of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 892, and a founding member of AMVETS Post 1111.

Additionally, Mr. Cantu founded the legendary GI Joe's Living Military History Museum in Kinston, which displays memorabilia, uniforms, weapons, and photos from all major conflicts starting with the Revolutionary War and became a place of comfort and solace for veterans to share their stories and heal their wounds.

Those who knew Mr. Cantu described three principles that best defined him: his legendary work ethic, his optimistic nature, and his love for his fellow veterans.

We honor him today. We remember him today. Sergeant Juan Eric Cantu was a humble servant, community leader, and remarkable human.

May he rest in peace and may God bless his family and friends.

MEDICARE FEE CUT

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the proposed 3.37 percent Medicare fee cut. When a physician sees a Medicare patient, they do so out of the goodness of their heart. They care for the patient. It doesn't make financial sense.

When you see a Medicare or Medicaid patient, you actually lose money. It