

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

costs more to see patients than you are getting for the cost of care.

When I ran a private practice, I stayed up many, many nights, Saturday nights, trying to find out how to squeeze out money—to find each paper clip, make sure that we knew where the staplers were—just to make sure that we made payroll and that we paid the light bill.

Oftentimes I did not take a salary when we could not do that, but that was private practice. We were our own destiny. We knew how to take care of patients. We had an ownership in patients.

When adjusted for inflation over the last 20 years, the Medicare fee schedule for physicians has been cut by 20 percent.

What other profession expects to be cut year after year rather than receive raises, especially during this inflationary period?

One of ObamaCare's directives was to starve private practice, to force them, to drive them into employment. My former practice is employed now by a hospital. They have done well, but this is an entirely different tenet with patient care.

Physicians are being cut every year in their pay. Hospitals, albeit smaller, get raises every year.

□ 1045

While this still may not be much to carry the cost of care in these hospitals, but why are the people who are providing care to the patients the ones who are being cut?

Why is this a bad model?

It is because I think employed physicians tend to be a different bird from private practice physicians. They tend to be more working on the clock, they tend to decrease efficiency, and they actually increase the cost of care.

There is much more ownership with private practice physicians. When a private practice physician comes into a community, they establish roots, and they become part of the community. They join churches, and they join civic groups.

Unfortunately, the employed physician model as we see it now is much more transitory. There is a contract, and if that doesn't work out, then they move in 3 years. Then patients are left in the lurch. My doctor—it is always my doctor—took care of me for 20 years. That is starting to stop; that is ceasing.

The Medicare fee schedule cuts must stop. This is why I introduced H.R. 6683, the Preserving Seniors' Access to Physicians Act. The legislation stops this year's cut while we work on a permanent solution.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the reasons I came to Congress: to fix Medicare. We are experiencing a critical doctor shortage now, but it is going to be off the cliff in 3 to 5 years, especially with surges.

No other profession, as I just said, expects to be cut every year rather than

get raises. Every day now we add 10,000 new patients to Medicare. Imagine a hardware store, Mr. Speaker, where you bought a hammer for a dollar, and you were paid 60 cents. It doesn't make sense.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support the bill.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 46 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Holy and immortal God, we pause to offer our prayers of both gratitude and grief for Your servant, Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson. Words cannot adequately express our appreciation to You for allowing us to share the journey of life with such a woman of perseverance and presence, leadership and legendary impact. Thank You for allowing her to touch the lives of so many in both her nursing and political careers.

While we mourn Representative Johnson's passing, with hearts bereft of her friendship and mentorship, and with compassion for her grieving family, in the face of the fragility of life, we do not grieve as those without hope. For we trust in the promise she held dear, that those who have departed this life will be united with You in everlasting glory.

May her memory be a blessing, and may Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson be blessed as she rests now from her labor in lifelong service to You and to Your people.

Into Your everlasting arms we commend our lives, and in Your eternal name we offer our prayer.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr.

WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

CELEBRATING KANE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS POST'S CENTENNIAL

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate 100 years of the Kane Veterans of Foreign Wars charter located in McKean County.

The Kane VFW post is a top-tier post in the State. In 2023, they qualified and were awarded All State status for the second time and were also awarded the coveted All American Post award for the first time.

The post will mark this anniversary with a celebration at the end of January with numerous guest speakers, camaraderie, and friendship.

The Kane VFW post's first meeting to establish their charter was held on December 11, 1923, in the Eagle Hall, and they were granted their charter on January 29, 1924, with just 79 founding members. Over the years, the club grew in size, serving as a place for veterans and community members alike to gather in fellowship.

Mr. Speaker, VFW posts are so important to our communities because they offer veterans a place to gather together and connect. From hosting local Scout troops to important community meetings, the Kane VFW post has seen it all over the last 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Kane VFW and their dedicated members on this monumental anniversary.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF THE HONORABLE EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

(Mr. ALLRED asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALLRED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a Texas giant, a trailblazer, a leader, my mentor, and my friend, Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson.

Congresswoman Johnson was unrivaled in her ability to deliver for Dallas and Texas. She always put Texans first and fought every day for her constituents in Dallas.