

HONORING THE LIFE OF REVEREND WALTER "SLIM" COLEMAN

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

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor a community activist and fighter for justice: Reverend Walter "Slim" Coleman.

Reverend Slim was part of the Rainbow Coalition. He always worked to help the powerless build power, expand opportunity, and hold the government accountable to the people's needs. Moreover, he brought Caucasian allies to that fight alongside Latino and Black leaders. Slim helped elect Chicago's first Black mayor, Harold Washington.

Slim was in it for the long haul. No setback and no loss deterred him from fighting for affordable housing, good schools, community safety, better healthcare, and more.

Alongside his wife, Emma Lozano, the reverend was a leader of Chicago's sanctuary movement. In 2006, he declared his church as a sanctuary to protect immigrants from deportation, and other churches followed suit.

Our city is indebted to Reverend Slim. We miss him immensely. Rest in peace, my dear friend.

REFORMING FOREST MANAGEMENT

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, the United States is now the number one importer of wood products. It had been China up until recently when they finally slowed down their building.

This shouldn't even be possible or happening.

As you see, Mr. Speaker, California, the West Coast, and Western States have massively overcrowded forests due to the inattention of the U.S. Forest Service not keeping up the pace and scale to keep up with the amount of board feet that are growing each year.

Take a look across a lot of rural America, Mr. Speaker, and you will see that these areas are, indeed, too overcrowded with trees. A healthy forest might have 50 to 70 adult trees per acre. We see a situation where there are 500 to 1,000 trees of all sizes.

For a healthy and resilient forest, each tree needs enough nutrients, water, and sunlight to thrive, but when the trees grow too close together, they compete for these resources, are weakened, and then are susceptible to insects and other damage.

You can see on the far side of this poster, Mr. Speaker, a dense forest that is going to be very fire-prone and very likely to be attacked by bugs or go through a drought period and become unhealthy.

A thin forest like this is what we need the Forest Service to be doing. It survives fire and is much healthier for much longer. This is what we need.

CONGRATULATING NORTHWEST OHIO SCIENCE FAIR WINNER CALEB KOWALSKI

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Caleb Kowalski, a bright young student who is the future of northwest Ohio. He won recognition for his scientific achievement.

Caleb is a seventh grader at Put-In-Bay Middle School, and when he needed a project for his school's science fair this winter, he turned to our nearby Great Lake Erie for inspiration.

Caleb chose to explore solutions to the algae blooms that historically plague our freshwater kingdom. He did this by testing the ability of various plants to keep dangerous nutrients from flowing into rivers, lakes, and streams. Those nutrients harm the ecosystem and endanger boaters, and if not addressed, swimmers will have difficulties. These blooms also could turn Lake Erie and Lake Ontario into swamps if not addressed.

Caleb's project earned a superior rating. Then, the district allowed him to compete at the Northwest Science and Engineering Fair in February. There he earned, again, first place in his category, allowing him to apply for a slot to compete at the national level this October.

Mr. Speaker, let's applaud Caleb for his curiosity and scholarship. We hope that his generation will help us usher in complete health for the largest body of freshwater on Earth, the Great Lakes.

FOCUSING ON BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK

(Ms. STANSBURY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, this week we are closing out Black Maternal Health Week, focused on bringing attention, awareness, and, most importantly, action to improving maternal health for Black mothers.

Across the United States, Black mothers are three times more likely to die from pregnancy, making them the most at risk for maternal mortality of any group. In New Mexico, our Black babies have the highest ratio of infant mortality and premature births.

In addition, Black women and families are more likely to experience economic instability, lack of access, racism, and implicit bias within the system.

Black maternal health is a crisis that demands action. That is why I am proud to cosponsor Representative

LAUREN UNDERWOOD's Black Maternal Momnibus Act to help address the leading causes because access to care is a right, not a privilege, and we cannot leave Black women alone in this fight.

Our Black mothers are strong and resilient, and we must work every day to ensure that they have the respect, support, and care they need.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as you can see, there is just not enough time to speak on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, as we go into a number of religious holidays, which brings us together around peace, faith, and harmony, I want us to recognize that racism is raising its own ugly head again. It is raising its head on DEI, something that most of us of a certain age have no clue as to diversity, inclusion, exclusiveness, and the many different terminologies that can be utilized. We know the question of race and who we are.

It is important, as we take to our home districts, that we embrace the diversity that is in our districts, talk about the need for harmony and unity, and, as well, that we recognize that we are better together than we are separated.

I want to offer a commitment that we stand against racism, that we acknowledge it, that we join together in supporting H.R. 40, which is a commission to study reparations and develop reparation proposals.

I look forward to us ridding ourselves of the ugly face of racism as well as ensuring that we find a way to solve why we are divided instead of united.

Racism is ugly, and we must rid ourselves of it.

RESPONDING TO AMERICANS' CONCERNS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILLIAMS of New York). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MOORE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to join my colleagues and share some very important perspectives and messages.

House Republicans are responding to many concerns held by Americans

across the country, from this historic crisis happening at our southern border to the increasing cost of everyday goods and services as a result of the Biden administration's tax-and-spend agenda that is burdening hardworking families from New York to California, from Utah to Ohio.

Just this weekend, Americans watched as Iran launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, our ally, and yet again threatened Israel's very existence.

The American people deserve better. They deserve better leadership from this the administration, better stewardship of our Federal resources, and better strength on the global stage.

I am grateful to my colleagues for joining me on the House floor this evening to share their thoughts on how these issues are impacting their constituents and our Conference's solutions.

We look forward to hearing from a few of my colleagues this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON).

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MOORE for his leadership. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. Speaker, last week, on April 2, the New York Post published an op-ed that explained the proven conservative position of peace through strength. This continues the world-changing success for expanding freedom of Senator Barry Goldwater and President Ronald Reagan. There are over 20 countries now of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia that are free today because of the defeat of Soviet communism, which war criminal Putin wants to revive.

The article is titled: "Kudos to Speaker Johnson: Moving Ukraine aid is critical to national security," by Daniel Kochis, a senior fellow of the Hudson Institute's Center on Europe and Eurasia. The Hudson Institute was founded by the visionary Herman Kahn and is universally respected for its research and accuracy.

I am grateful to find and learn that Ambassador and Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina will now be a valued fellow.

The column in the New York Post reads: "Speaker Mike Johnson's Easter announcement that he will bring a new Ukraine aid package to a vote . . . is welcome news. Congressional backing for Ukraine assistance has been mired in the political muck for months. More than 5,000 miles away on the front lines, the maddening impasse has needlessly cost Ukrainian lives and territory.

"Three-quarters of Americans recognize that the Russian war against Ukraine and the conflicts that allies Israel and Taiwan face are important to U.S. national interests. It is time Congress got on the same page as its constituents and found a way to move critical support over the finish line.

"For Ukraine, the dearth of new aid has left soldiers to ration ammunition.

Russia's artillery advantage has consequently increased by an order of magnitude. Moscow has been firing five times the number of shells per day as Kyiv for most of the year."

This isn't in the article, Mr. Speaker, but you should understand many of these shells came from North Korea, from the dictatorship in the DPRK, which is also threatening our allies South Korea and Japan.

"Russian forces simply out-pummeled Ukraine's defenders. Some good news came 2 weeks ago: The Czech Republic has stepped into the breach in a major way, scouring the world to secure 800,000 artillery shells. The first batch could reach Ukraine early this month, a lifeline that will allow defending forces to start shooting more rounds, secure in the knowledge that replacements are on the way.

"But while the Czech Republic's role as intermediary in finding, purchasing, and securing permissions for the export of critical stocks of munitions is phenomenal, it won't fill the void left by a lack of American assistance and leadership."

□ 1845

"It is in America's interest to continue to aid our friends, most especially those defending their families and homes in Ukraine. Inaction not only harms U.S. national interests; it is expressly not what the American people have told policymakers they desire.

"Multiple recent polls have found a majority of Americans continue to back the aid to Ukraine, both economic and military. Behind closed doors, most congressional Members recognize the importance of continuing assistance. . . .

"From a military point of view, Ukraine is far better off today than it was 2 years ago and Russia far worse. And though from a moral perspective, the war remains starkly black and white . . . declined. . . .

"The administration allowing the war to fester by continuing to balk at sending Ukraine the systems it needs to win hasn't helped. . . .

"Team Biden's shockingly short-sighted and incompetent Afghanistan withdrawal is still fresh in the minds of many Americans, and they do not want a repeat. But failing to robustly stand with Ukraine and decisively defeat Russia makes this specter more likely to happen. The outcome of Russia's genocidal campaign there will have far broader implications for America's future security than either Afghanistan or Iraq. There is, however, room for optimism.

"Unlike in Afghanistan or Iraq, America is not a combatant in Ukraine, but we do benefit from its success. Despite some recent territorial setbacks, Ukraine can defeat Russia and its backers in Beijing, Pyongyang, and Tehran—if it has its allies' consistent, stout backing.

"The situation on the front lines—and in the minds of Americans—is far

from irretrievable, but it starts with Congress finding the will to do what is in the long-term American interest: Send Russian President Vladimir Putin a clear bipartisan message that the United States will stand by Ukraine for the long haul.

"Conservative lawmakers certainly have a duty to engage the administration on the migrant crisis, an issue of key importance to the public, but they should do so separately, recognizing Ukraine's national security importance. Linking aid to migration is a disservice to the American people. Support for Ukraine is not a worthless donation but a downpayment on a more secure and prosperous future. The American people know this; Congress should prove it does too."

Additionally, I include in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an op-ed that I provided in The Washington Times of February 9, 2022. This indicates: "Why Ukraine Matters for American Families: A destabilized world with higher inflation, gas prices."

[From the Washington Times, Feb. 9, 2022]

WHY UKRAINE MATTERS FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES

(By Joe Wilson)

Why does Ukraine matter for American families? Simply put: Energy prices, inflation and the empowerment of our adversaries across the world. Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to recreate the Soviet empire, divide our allies in Europe, and expand his malign influence across the globe.

Rather than former President Donald Trump's approach of Peace Through Strength, President Biden's foreign policy can best be characterized as war through weakness. During the Trump administration, Mr. Putin never attempted anything close to such an invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Putin understood that a severe price would be paid, as Mr. Trump, along with Congress, more than tripled the size of the European Deterrence Initiative, providing military support to countries on Russia's borders, and selling Javelin missiles to Ukraine, which former President Barack Obama failed to deliver.

The Biden administration gave Mr. Putin the biggest gift an American president has ever given the Russian dictator by waiving sanctions required by Congress in the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act, despite Mr. Putin's hacking and shutting down the Colonial Pipeline for six days, and shocking gas prices, just months earlier. Mr. Putin's answer: more aggression and the largest-ever military buildup on Ukraine's border. Rather than push back, Mr. Biden just two weeks ago appeared fine with a "minor incursion" into Ukraine. Biden officials have floated pulling back missile defense deployments in Europe, limiting the size and scope of military exercises, and even reentering the failed Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, which was violated by Russia and was withdrawn from by Mr. Trump, if Mr. Putin promised not to enter Ukraine. Yet even Mr. Biden seems to understand that his policy has completely failed, with CNN reporting that Mr. Biden told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday that an invasion by Russia is all but assured.

Mr. Putin wants to keep Ukraine dependent on Russian oil. He wants the Nord Stream 2 pipeline to neutralize Germany. With money, the oligarchs controlling the oppressed Russian people can attempt to re-

create the Soviet empire with a military-industrial complex, recently developing hypersonic missiles to attack America as Russia threatens to send troops in Cuba and Venezuela. In addition, Mr. Putin is working closer than ever with China in the military and economic arenas. Both countries are directly helping Iran, the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, bypass American sanctions.

The effect of a war in Ukraine on American families will be catastrophic. China is following our weak response to Mr. Putin's aggression in Ukraine closely, in addition to our surrender in Afghanistan, as it threatens Taiwan in an unprecedented fashion and moves even closer to aggression against the island. In addition, the results will be felt by Germany, Japan, Korea, Israel and India with the cost of gas increasing, doubling in my state of South Carolina alone, from the Trump administration to the Biden administration, crippling families with more inflation as transportation and delivery costs create shortages.

On my visit to Kyiv, Ukraine, in December, I was shocked that the Biden response was repeating the Afghanistan disaster of leaving Americans behind to provide \$40 million "after the invasion." Of note, there are currently 10,000 Americans in Ukraine, and 14,000 Ukrainians died in the 2014 Putin invasion.

I am grateful with bipartisan cooperation, the Biden policies have changed to reinforce the Trump policies of javelin missiles to Ukraine, reinforcing American troops in Poland, and promoting blocking of Nord Stream 2. It was revealing that our Delegation Leader, Democrat Ruben Gallego of Arizona, was publicly threatened in a television interview by a member of the Russian Duma to be kidnapped and brought to Moscow for trial for supporting Kyiv.

The Biden policy should be Peace Through Strength. War can be avoided if we impose real costs on Mr. Putin. The latest defensive weapons for land, air and sea should be provided to Ukraine, the largest country in Europe by geography with 43 million citizens. Our German allies should terminate Nord Stream 2 and its corruption forever. We should also immediately kick Russia out of the International SWIFT Code System, sanction the Russian financial system and sovereign debt to ensure that Mr. Putin does not have the resources to finance an invasion.

I was grateful to co-lead the Putin Accountability Act with the Republican Study Committee, which would do just that along with sanctions of Mr. Putin and his family directly, and his network of corrupt oligarchs.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Indeed, this op-ed, over 2 years old, actually is as true today as it was when it was published; that is, it does matter to American families, and we need to be understanding to protect the borders of Ukraine, of Israel, Taiwan, and America.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina for his words and his steadfast work on the Armed Services Committee and all national security matters.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GAETZ).

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank our vice chair for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a link for a document styled, "Unwelcome in Niger: The Interim Report from Congressman Matt Gaetz on the

Crisis in Niger." https://gaetz.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/gaetz.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/Rep.%20Gaetz%27%20Niger%20Report%20-%20Unwelcome%20in%20Niger%204.17.24_compressed%20%281%29.pdf.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN JOHNSON: I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the actions taken by the U.S. Embassy in Niger, particularly involving the Ambassador, Kathleen A. FitzGibbon and the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché (SDO/DATT), Colonel Nora J. Nelson-Richter. The recent events have raised serious questions about the conduct and decision-making of these officials, and I believe Congress must address these issues.

As a service member deployed to Niger, Africa, I have noticed that the Embassy, and more specifically the SDO/DATT, intentionally suppressed intelligence information from the ground force collection elements to maintain the facade of a great country-to-country relationship. They failed to be transparent with U.S. service members deployed to this country. They gave a pretense that "things are being worked" and "that is above our level," all the while Diplomatic Overflight Clearances for U.S. Military aircraft were purposefully not being approved by the country's Military Government as a political bargaining chip to entice the U.S. Government back to negotiate their withdrawal.

Since July 23rd, the day of the Coup d'état, the Americans deployed here have not been able to perform their primary mission and have been told to "sit and hold," it is clear that the country of Niger does not want a permanent military presence in their country and they have informed us that we need to leave. At this time, there are approximately 1,100 U.S. Military Service Members in the country who are essentially being held hostage from returning home to their families while the State Department continues with failed diplomacy by not communicating with the Country of Niger on what their withdrawal plan would look like after the Status of Forces Agreement was repudiated by the Host Nation. Additionally, the government of Niger is not processing Visas for U.S. members for entry into the country, which is especially concerning considering that all U.S. forces were scheduled to end a six-month deployment early this month when relief forces arrived. The Embassy failed to share any of this information with decision-makers at any level in the Department of Defense regarding this, further complicating our ability to conduct that swap of personnel.

These actions have deeply troubled me and many others in the community at home, as well as all the service members deployed here with me, and their families back in the States. Our diplomatic and defense representatives need to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct, especially in sensitive regions like Niger. The actions taken by the embassy officials not only reflect poorly on the United States but also have potential implications for our bilateral relations with other Partner Nations and the safety of our personnel in the region.

As a concerned citizen, I urge you to use your position and influence to investigate these matters and hold the responsible parties accountable thoroughly. Transparency and accountability are fundamental to the integrity of our diplomatic and defense institutions, and any misconduct or negligence must be addressed promptly and decisively.

I trust that you will take appropriate action to ensure that the necessary inquiries

and corrective measures are undertaken. It is vital for the reputation and effectiveness of our diplomatic and defense efforts in Niger, Africa, and beyond.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to your leadership in addressing these concerns.

Sincerely,

USAF,

Air Base 101, Niamey.

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor this evening to expose a cover-up in the African country of Niger. This cover-up exists to conceal the humiliating failures of the Biden administration in Niger, throughout Africa, and throughout the world. We learn of the victims of this cover-up, the 1,100 U.S. troops currently stationed in Niger, functionally stranded by a Biden administration which cares more about saving face than saving their lives.

Our troops in Niger have been pleading for help. They have sent intelligence reports and letters stating that they are rarely getting safe water. They can't get diplomatic oversights to receive medicine, fresh troop rotations, or basic supplies. They have no mission.

In addition, the local authorities are becoming increasingly hostile. The current government of Niger has called the U.S. presence in the country illegal.

Why have these pleas not been heard? It is because U.S. Embassy Niger has been blocking the intelligence. I fear, as we speak, the conditions may be forming to create another Benghazi-style attack.

How did we get here with 1,100 American troops stuck, thoroughly unwelcome in a country where we have invested more than half a billion U.S. taxpayer dollars? It all began when Biden and Blinken chose Niger to be the centerpiece of their Africa strategy. Blinken even visited the country in March of last year saying: "Niger is . . . an extraordinary model . . . a model of resilience, a model of democracy, a model of cooperation."

What a difference a year makes. Just 1 year and 1 day after those remarks, the democratically elected government of Niger was replaced by a military coup, and the United States military literally trained the coup leaders.

I asked General Langley, who runs AFRICOM, why this happened, why so many coup leaders are trained by our servicemembers. He said: Well, Congressman, training people to overthrow their democratically elected governments is not in our curriculum.

However, the results are staggering and embarrassing in Guinea, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and other countries. There were coups, and in each of those coups, there was one common element: U.S. training for the coup leaders.

Now, the coup government currently in charge of Niger wouldn't even meet with General Langley when he went to talk about our base. The Prime Minister literally slammed the door in his

face. One would think, if we trained you to overthrow your democratically elected government, we could at least get a meeting. However, instead of a burgeoning pro-U.S. sentiment, we now have the coup leaders we trained turning to Russia as their preferred security partner.

Where does that leave our 1,100 troops, our Americans? I did not serve in the military. I represent a military community, and I hear that these senior-enlisted servicemembers at a U.S. installation abroad, they are a big deal. They are kind of like the mayor of the installation.

The senior-enlisted servicemember at Airbase 101 in Niger wrote a letter to Congressman DUSTY JOHNSON.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD this letter.

“Dear Congressman JOHNSON, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the actions taken by U.S. Embassy Niger, particularly involving the Ambassador Kathleen A. FitzGibbon. . . . The recent events have raised serious questions about the conduct and decisionmaking of these officials, and I believe Congress must address these issues.

“As a servicemember deployed to Niger, Africa, I have noticed that the Embassy . . . intentionally suppressed intelligence information from the ground force collection elements to maintain the facade of a great country-to-country relationship. They failed to be transparent with U.S. servicemembers deployed to this country. They gave a pretense that ‘things are being worked’ and ‘that it is above our level,’ all the while, diplomatic overflight clearances for U.S. military aircraft were purposefully not being approved by the country’s military government as a political bargaining chip to entice the U.S. Government back to negotiate their withdrawal.

“Since July 23, the day of the coup d’etat, the Americans deployed here have not been able to perform their primary mission and have been told to ‘sit and hold.’ It is clear that the country of Niger does not want a permanent military presence in their country and they have informed us we need to leave. At this time, there are approximately 1,100 U.S. military servicemembers in the country who are essentially being held hostage from returning home to their families while the State Department continues with failed diplomacy by not communicating with the country of Niger on what the withdrawal plan would look like. . . . Additionally, the government of Niger is not processing visas for U.S. servicemembers for entry into the country, which is especially concerning considering that all U.S. Forces were scheduled to end a 6-month deployment early this month when relief forces arrived. The embassy failed to share any of this information with decision-makers at any level in the Department of Defense regarding this, further complicating our ability to conduct the swap of personnel.

“These actions have deeply troubled me and many others in the community at home, as well as the servicemembers deployed here with me, and their families back in the States. Our diplomatic and defense representatives need to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct, especially in sensitive regions like Niger. The actions taken by the embassy officials not only reflect poorly on the United States but also have potential implications for our bilateral relations with other partner nations and the safety of our personnel in this region.”

When I became aware of this letter, my office conducted a number of interviews, which confirmed the claims made by the senior-enlisted official, and he signed his name to that letter, which we have entered in the RECORD. We have done those investigations. We have learned that the top public health official says that in the month of May, they are going to run out of medicine in Niger. It is worse than that. Our partner countries, Italy and Germany, who you would think would help us facilitate medicine and supplies, but they won’t even help transport needed materiel to our servicemembers because they are worried about being expelled from the country.

If that isn’t worse, the fact that we have got Russia as the preferred security partner now means there are Russians behind the wire at Airbase 101. We have Russians on our base somewhere. That would never happen. The only reason it is happening is because Blinken and Biden are humiliated that their plan failed, that they poured half a billion dollars into this country where now we are being thrown out by the scruff of our neck. Well, Joe Biden and Tony Blinken’s failures should not have to be visited on the 1,100 servicemembers who are there fighting for us, wanting to do patriotic duty and they are being held hostage and they are stranded.

I will fight for them. I will fight against this administration that would use our servicemembers as pawns because they can’t get their act together.

Just because Biden and Blinken can’t say oops doesn’t mean we should abandon our troops.

Mr. Speaker, and I thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MOORE) for his indulgence and the time.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for sharing that information. It is part of the job that we need to be doing and what we can do to uncover and for a thorough analysis.

Mr. Speaker, I will next yield to my colleague from the great State of California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, as we contemplate and navigate our way through these hard times, the difficult economy with, indeed, Bidenomics working the way it has been the last couple years for us in this country, we have to get to what is the root cause and what is the route out of this? It

really comes down to getting back to our roots, getting back to the source of our economy. Where does the economy come from, and how do we make things reasonably priced again and affordable for our countrymen?

If you look here, they are all tied together when you get right down to it. Cost of electricity up over 28 percent, food over 20 percent, residential rent nearly 20 percent. What are the building blocks that help us to thrive and help us get back out of this mess?

Well, I will start. There are a few items that I work quite a bit on in my committee work, back at home and here in D.C., as well. Forestry is right at the beginning of that. What do you get from good forestry: Healthy forests and an economy that comes from our rural areas of the country that are suffering so much due to shutdowns, regulations, and inactivity by the U.S. Forest Service.

You see here a forest, how it looks when it has been treated properly, when it has been thinned on this side of the poster here. That is a healthy forest. That is one that will withstand fire. It is good for the wildlife population. It is good for the trees themselves. They won’t have to compete for limited soil and water resources, especially through a drought period.

This side here is a tinderbox that is going to go up and it is going to be devastating as so much has happened in the West over these last years. A million-acre fire happened in my district. There are many six-digit fires all over the western States. This does not work for very long. It is not good for wildlife when it is green, and certainly not for when it is caught in the middle of a forest fire.

Indeed, we have to do much more work in order to catch up on that because of what I mentioned. The cost of rent, when you have high costs of building inputs which can come from wood products that, just a couple years ago, were in short, and paper products. Remember the toilet paper shortage. Why in the world did we have that? We need to have our American forests be very active.

There are over 800 million acres of forest that have approximately 350 billion trees in this country, a total inventory of 13 trillion board-feet, annual growth of 300 billion board-feet, whether we harvest it or not. America’s total wood use via lumber, paper, biomass, and firewood is approximately half of annual growth, 150 billion board-feet. We see we have an issue, don’t we? If we are only harvesting and using half of what grows each year, that means these forests will get more and more dense every year.

We have the ability to do something about that. For some reason, I keep wondering why the U.S. is—recently surpassing China since their economy is slowing down—now the number one importer of wood products when we have the resource here that actually needs to be thinned, needs to be harvested, needs to be taken care of, and

not clear cut, not the whole works. That isn't what it is about. That is the first thing that the city folks want to say: Oh, you are going to cut all the trees. No.

□ 1900

We thin them out. This is what that looks like right here. Then that forest keeps on growing and is healthy. The next wave of harvest happens 30, 40, 50 years later, and it is a successful program instead of importing and sending the jobs somewhere else.

Now that China has receded somewhat—number one importer of wood. It doesn't make a lick of sense to me.

In the farm bill, we can address some of these issues coming up if we can be successful on passing what would be best in a 5-year farm bill soon and help with our forest health as well as the cost of housing and building new housing, building new apartments, whatever, for people.

That will get me to my next poster here having to do with food, which is another part of the building blocks.

I mentioned electricity. Those prices have gone up, food, and then housing.

Here, we have an example of the food that is grown in my home State of California, but it is important to the whole country. Many other States are key to food supply in the Midwest, the Southern States, and so many areas of the country.

I will point out what we have growing in California because we oftentimes have a water problem where the water supply, in tougher years, doesn't get to agriculture. The last 2 years, we have had an amazing water supply, amazing snowpack—indeed, above the 100-percent level of normal.

Our lakes are filling. We can keep after the people making the decisions to allow them to fill the last bit to top it off because we still have several reservoirs that have a lot of space in them. I want to see them all hit 100 percent so we can survive maybe the next drought or certainly allocate water to agriculture as well as the people in the urban areas who are seeing themselves having to ration water. They are going to be cut back to 42 gallons per day, in some cases, due to the extreme measures that people who are not planning water supply are going to cause them to do.

I don't know how that looks to my colleagues in L.A. County, Orange County, San Francisco County, having to tell people they are only going to get 42 gallons of water per day because of the mismanagement of water supply in our State.

We could be building more storage. We should be building more storage. We have the chance to build a place called Sites Reservoir, 1.5 million acre-feet of storage. We could raise Shasta Dam only 18 feet, which would yield 630,000 acre-feet more of water.

If we were actually filling the San Luis Reservoir the last 500,000 acre-feet of space it has right now—because they

won't run the pumps because of some phony numbers they are using on fish and it affecting the fish by running the pumps. There are half a million acre-feet we are leaving on the table this year right now unless something changes dramatically soon on running the pumps down there in the delta.

The priority these days everywhere is fish and environmental water. People are being left behind on this. We are going to see the allocation of water to some of the San Joaquin districts and areas curtailed, again, in a high-water year, in a high-snowpack year—great water. We have been blessed. They are going to see only 30 or 35 percent of their normal allocation, and that means these crops aren't going to be grown.

As I pointed out, these crops are grown in California: 100 percent of the artichokes, celery, garlic, honeydew, kiwifruit, nectarines, olives, plums, shelled almonds, shelled pistachios, shelled walnuts, tomatoes. Basically, 100 percent of what America uses comes from California on a commercial basis. I know people grow patches of it here and there in their garden and stuff around the country, but commercially grown, that is what California represents.

Getting down to some that are not quite 100 percent: mandarins, avocados, grapes, carrots, broccoli.

These are at the 90 percent mark: strawberries, 89 percent; wild rice, 60 percent grown in California; horseradish, 30 percent, a lot of it up in my area of Tully Lake—except they are having their water taken away, except they are having their dams removed due to environmental stuff.

How are we going to get a handle on the high price of inflation? With the dams I just mentioned, electricity is up 20-something percent.

They tear down hydroelectric dams and say they are going to replace them with high-cost solar or wind that has to be massively subsidized; otherwise, no one would ever be able to afford it. They take out the hydroelectric dams. That is not going to make electricity any cheaper.

Let's talk about food. If you don't build the water, allocate the water, and back people off on the regulations, such as making them electrify every aspect of agriculture and even the equipment—they are coming after the locomotives that transport all this and the trucks that transport it. All that does is drive up the cost of food.

As I mentioned also with housing, if we can't cut the timber, if we can't provide for low-cost timber that comes from this country instead of somewhere else—it still baffles me that we are the number one importer of wood products—then housing is not going to get any cheaper either. That is tied into a lot of other regulations, available land use, and things like that.

All of these things work together to drive up the costs for regular Americans who are struggling these days.

They don't have the same options of freedom of movement, their freedom of time, where they might want to send their kids to school, or go on a vacation once in a while, tourism.

All those things are dramatically curtailed because of government regulations, lack of government foresight on energy, where our energy is going to come from, what our energy policy is. Every time you don't allow a pipeline to happen means it is going to have to be coming from somewhere else, imported oil and gas. Yes, we are going to continue to use oil and gas in this country for a long time. The rest of the world is going to be.

If we want to be competitive, we are putting ourselves down a really steep rathole if we are not going to continue to allow oil and gas to power certain aspects of our economy, of our mobility, et cetera.

We are not going to electrify everything at the same time we are pulling out hydroelectric dams because of the environment. We are precariously on the edge of whether we are going to allow the nuclear power plant to continue to run in California past just another a few years.

Are we going to build more nuclear power in this country? If you are worried about CO₂, it is a great way to go, as are the hydroelectric dams. I am not worried about CO₂ because it only represents 0.04 percent of our atmosphere. It is a rounding error, and it has been hyped a lot in order to make climate change scare the heck out of everybody when it really isn't that kind of a factor.

There are other things we can do cleaner, cleaner running engines and things like that, less methane. Those are good things to work at, but CO₂ is not the problem. CO₂ is basically sucked up by these plants that we grow in agriculture and the forest photograph I showed you a minute ago. They are out there enjoying CO₂ and giving us oxygen back if we would just be a little smarter about it.

At the end of it, one of the important things we need to do this year, this spring, really, is move the farm bill because it is important as far as forestry goes. It is important, as far as this food supply goes, to have stability in the ag economy. A big portion of it is the SNAP program, which is important to help keep low-cost food on the table for many Americans who are on the low side of the income scale or going through tough times themselves. We need to pass that in order to have the SNAP program stay viable and stay modernized as things change.

Moving forward with the farm bill, it is going to be very important in the short term to get a 5-year bill and not just another extension, which doesn't really allow us to change or upgrade what the pieces of the farm bill are, like crop insurance.

Some of these crops need to have more ability to access crop insurance. If you have crop insurance, then there

is less need to have a bailout for a disaster because it is being taken care of upfront, as well as a promotion of products, some of that through MAP funds and other programs to promote some of these products that we export.

We do need to have an export economy. We have a giant negative economy with import-export with China and others, and agriculture has been one of our mainstays to have anywhere close to balance on foreign trade, so it is a good thing for us.

Instead, what do we get? We get things such as the Inflation Reduction Act, which is a joke in its name. It didn't reduce inflation. Inflation is still going up.

It is still part of our everyday worry we have here, and that is what we get is more government spending. Instead, unleash the economy by allowing people to log timber, grow food, and produce energy as I am talking about here.

We need to be able to make a difference to help these producers and then help the consumers. We need to produce more fertilizer in this country. We need to mine more minerals in this country. They are important to all of these sectors and producing energy.

If we want to have more gadgets, more equipment that uses electricity, then why aren't we mining the products here instead of making it a problem for some Third World country that doesn't have near the labor protections or environmental protections that we have here?

If we do all of these things, it makes things more affordable, brings the jobs home, and makes us more accountable as a country. Instead, we are losing ground on the world stage in many aspects. Why are we a net agriculture importer when we have so much plenty in this country?

We are less independent. We are less resilient. We are less competitive due to these policies that are associated with Bidenomics. In the face of declining farm income and these other challenges, it is essential that we prioritize farm and ranch families with the farm bill, with what we consume here.

I mentioned crop insurance, which is extremely important. Additionally, the farm safety net is important, which is part of that farm bill.

The input costs I mentioned, water allocations, all the above are important to work our way through instead of ignoring them and thinking that the priorities seemed to be reset around here. They have nothing to do with helping Americans in their everyday lives.

It is a steep road here, but we can get back to a little bit of common sense. I had the chance to speak to the President right on this floor about water supply, about our timber situation, our forest situation here, and he listened. I just hope his Cabinet, his people who surround him, will pay more attention to what we are dealing with and how negatively, when these things aren't

paid attention to and solved, how much it hurts the American people, how much it costs them, how much it costs them options for their family to do other things other than just trying to get by.

It doesn't have to be this way. This inflation we have had the last 3 years—we came out of COVID, yes, but our economy should be thriving much better than what it is and not have these ridiculous regulations and things that limit us so much and advantage our competitors around the world—China, the Pacific Rim, and others—especially at such a perilous time with such unrest in the world, with the wars that are breaking out.

We need to be strong. We need to be self-sufficient.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and appreciate his willingness to participate always.

Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up our Special Order and my remarks, the world watched over the weekend as Iran launched an unprecedented attack on our ally, Israel.

This attack deservedly was met with scorn and contempt from governments across the world, and it was reassuring to see such strong cooperation from the U.S., U.K., Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia to intercept Iranian missiles to keep Jerusalem and its holy sites from being completely destroyed.

I never thought I would be in that situation, to be in Congress, to be a part of legislation this week, to be at this moment, to meet this moment.

People watched across the world because of these holy sites. Look, I have said this before, and as I finalize my thoughts here, I think back to one of my first meetings in my first term of Congress. I got to meet with the Consul General from the Israeli Consulate in Los Angeles. He was in Utah, and I got a chance to sit down with him. I said, as I dig into this, I am so impressed with the Abraham Accords.

Candidly, I think it was President Trump and Vice President Pence's most significant success in our foreign policy during their administration. The Abraham Accords are diplomatic and trade relationships with Israel and Arab nations. I mean, when you think about the years and decades and centuries of us trying to find common ground and peace in that region of the world, we created an opportunity, and the U.S. was a big part of this, to establish these relationships with Arab nations and Israel. Potential bellwether countries like Saudi Arabia could have joined on.

I asked him what the recipe was for success to make that happen, and he said that it came down to one thing, that these Arab states—Arab Emirates, Morocco, Bahrain—knew the U.S. stood firm against Iranian aggression. That was what he boiled the whole entire experience down to.

Nobody in that region wants Iran to gain more influence. They want to destabilize everything over there. The

whole region understands this. Arab nation, Jewish nation, whatever, they all understand that Iran wants to destabilize.

They want to have the U.S. as a presence, a strong presence, to make sure that the U.S. had the backs of Arab nations and had Israel's back against continual potential aggression from Iran.

□ 1915

Knowing that, they were willing to enter into these trade relationships that were potentially treacherous because Iran doesn't want anybody to have a trade relationship, a diplomatic relationship with Israel.

This is my number one, biggest complaint with President Biden's foreign policy, is to just—okay, look, President Obama was going on the JCPOA, so let's just start those talks back up again and completely ignore the success that we had had to create peace in the Middle East.

It is something that every President has wanted. President Clinton, watching what he was trying to do, the absolute tragedy of the assassination that took place during his time. Every President, Republican or Democrat, has wanted peace in the Middle East.

To flatly say and to overlook the reason why the Abraham Accords were successful and to not take that type of same strength to Iran, it was the biggest blunder, I believe, in President Biden's foreign policy approach in that particular region.

Is it any wonder why we are sitting here today with unprecedented drone and missile attacks directly on our ally Israel?

You have to stand up to Iran in order to promote peace in the Middle East. You cannot have it all. You can't have the entire pie. You have to call it as it is sometimes and cut it off.

The JCPOA should never have been reengaged. It has not created any positive outcomes over in the region. Can anybody disagree with that?

Are we better today in the Middle East than we were when we had the Abraham Accords thriving? No, we are not, and everybody knows that. Anybody who is honest is willing to address it.

If you want to be Israel's ally, you cannot also continue to pander to Iran. It is not a recipe for success, and that is not just from the Israeli point of view. That is from the Arab State point of view. I hope to impress upon the Biden administration recognition of that.

That is what we are trying to do this week, putting several floor measures up to hold Iran and its proxy groups accountable for their actions. We will continue to hold the line in supporting Israel and ensuring they have what they need to defend their freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis impacts us all. Regardless of whether you live in a city, a suburb, or a rural town, many Americans are concerned about their housing stability.

Homelessness has risen every single year since 2017. The shortage of available and affordable housing has only worsened. High interest rates and student debt has made the American Dream of homeownership out of reach and impossible for too many. Severely underfunded programs are unable to tackle the most critical issues facing our communities in a meaningful way, and wages are just not keeping pace with rising housing costs.

The human right to housing is more than a slogan and more than just four walls and a roof over someone's head. The human right to housing means realizing safety and stability and dignity through housing.

I am convening tonight's Special Order hour for the Congressional Progressive Caucus, so that I, along with my colleagues, can talk about the housing challenges facing American households and the progressive solutions we can champion to address this issue.

Some of those solutions are: bridging the gap between income and housing costs and expanding and preserving the supply of affordable, accessible rental homes for people with the lowest incomes, providing emergency rental assistance to households in crisis, strengthening and enforcing renter protections, and opposing efforts to undermine housing first and criminalize homelessness.

Safe, affordable, dignified housing, I know, is a foundation on which so much of our quality of life and our economic security is built. I hear often that housing is just too hard to tackle at the Federal level, but if we want to realize housing for all as a human right, we have to challenge ourselves to move beyond traditional approaches and embrace creativity and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PORTER).

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, my son Paul broke my heart with a question. He asked: Mom, will you come visit me when I grow up and live outside of California?

I asked: Why would you want to live out of State?

It wasn't that there is somewhere else he would rather be. He was just a teenager, a teenager already worrying that he wouldn't be able to afford to live where he grew up. He was right to be worried.

We all face a big cost-of-living problem. Housing has become too expensive and affordable housing altogether too scarce. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that there is a nationwide shortage of more than 7 million affordable homes. That is not just a problem; it is a full-blown crisis.

Washington has bungled this for decades, and nothing is changing. Earlier this year, bipartisan House and Senate leaders promised the biggest investment in housing that Congress has made in 35 years. Until the deal fell apart. We are back to solving yesterday's problems tomorrow maybe.

Washington insiders may not have a plan, but I do. Let's start with the easiest step. Let's create a housing committee. We currently lump housing issues into the Financial Services Committee, a body focused on Wall Street, banking, and financial markets. However, housing is about so much more. It is about shelter. It is about well-being. It is about opportunity, not just about Wall Street profits.

Housing should have a dedicated committee, and then Republicans and Democrats on that housing committee must work together to do three related things. First, increase the supply of housing; second, make housing easier to build; and, third, make housing more affordable.

Believe it or not, the supply part is pretty easy. Republicans and Democrats alike actually want to increase our housing supply. You don't have to take my word for it. Look at the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, which would enhance tax credits to build 2 million homes over the next decade. It is publicly supported by 111 Democrats and 111 Republicans, so let's pass that.

Why stop with tax credits? Let's unleash private capital for home construction by guaranteeing and securitizing the construction of one-to-four-unit starter homes, just like the government already does for big apartment buildings built by Wall Street real estate firms.

Those are the steps that we need to take to invest in our housing supply, but actually building those homes is still too challenging, and it shouldn't be. Stick and brick homes are expensive. Manufacturing costs have gone down in virtually every industry except home building. Why aren't we copying and learning from what worked in other industries?

Imagine a home built, at least in part, from 3D-printed materials. Congress can invest in this type of technology and reduce building costs by over 30 percent just by thinking creatively. All levels of government

should be partners in creative thinking. Congress should reward counties and cities that take steps to make their building and zoning requirements more flexible, and the Federal Government should release some of its unused land so we can build homes on it.

With these simple steps, we can build way more affordable homes and get those financed and built. Then we just need to figure out how to make them affordable to own. One problem is that hedge funds have been scooping up all of the affordable homes, especially starter homes.

We need to pass the End Hedge Fund Control of American Homes Act and tax Wall Street investors who purchase hundreds of homes solely for profits. Houses should be for homeowners and mom-and-pop landlords, not Wall Street companies looking to drive up their profits.

With the money we make from that bill, we can invest in downpayment assistance for first-time home buyers. Often the biggest thing stopping people from owning a home is not having the cash to pay up front for the downpayment, even if they can afford the regular payments on that mortgage. Downpayment assistance will solve that.

This is what a plan looks like. Congress just doesn't have one.

The United States did not wind up with a shortage of nearly 7 million affordable homes overnight. Our housing crisis is the gradual consequence of leaders in Washington being asleep at the wheel for over 30 years.

Well, Congress needs to wake up. Lowering people's housing costs isn't pie in the sky. We have done it before. We did it through the GI Bill for servicemembers, and we can do it again for all Americans. That is what we need from Washington, and I will keep pushing to get it done.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman PORTER for her remarks. I could not agree with her more. That is why we are doing this Special Order hour on housing. We need our Congress to wake up.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine we were wrapping up a session, and you had nowhere to go, you didn't have a place where you could lay your head tonight. You had no roof over your head on the coldest day of the year, let's assume we were in January.

The reality is that on any given night in America, more than 600,000 people experience homelessness, and nearly half of these individuals—250,000—sleep outside. In Illinois, the average age of someone experiencing homelessness is not 55, it is not 65, it is not 70. It is just 9 years of age. Can you imagine having a grandchild, a son, a sister, a niece not having anywhere to sleep at the age of 9?

Homelessness is increasing across the country because more and more hard-working families and individuals are struggling to make ends meet; and in the richest country in the world, rents