

winding, I stand here on the floor of the House of Representatives with clear eyes, proud of the progress we have seen in the past decade and beyond, along with a faith in the Constitution that is whole, that is complete, and that is total.

Madam Speaker, just a few miles from here is the Congressional Cemetery. There is a silent protest happening. There amongst the tombstones of former Representatives, Senators, and former Cabinet members is the tombstone without a name that instead bears the message: "When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one."

Leonard Matlovich is laid to rest there, a Vietnam veteran who rose to fame in 1975 by becoming the first gay servicemember to publicly reveal his sexuality and challenging the military's longstanding ban on LGBTQ+ people.

After meeting with famed gay rights activist Frank Kameney in D.C., Matlovich hand delivered a letter to his commanding officer, declaring his sexual identity.

Despite years of exemplary service and multiple tours of duty in Vietnam, which included a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart that he had earned after nearly being killed by a land mine, he was discharged.

Madam Speaker, 13 years later, Leonard passed away from HIV/AIDS after years of advocacy, bravery, and being a voice for LGBTQ+ servicemembers serving during Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

Our Nation failed Leonard and the estimated 114,000 servicemembers who were discharged on the basis of their sexual orientation between World War II and 2011.

The repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell came 13 years ago, but the hurt, shame, and legacy of this rule lives on in the form of missed benefits and harassment.

As ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have heard stories from former servicemembers who either ended their service early or were discharged due to who they loved.

To date, there has been no congressional-led effort to investigate the historic and ongoing impacts of discriminatory military policies on LGBTQ+ servicemembers and veterans.

That is why I introduced legislation to establish a commission to collect facts and testimonies while also providing recommendations to Congress, the VA, and the uniformed services on how to move forward from these harmful policies.

There are currently 250,000 Active-Duty LGBTQ+ servicemembers and over 1.5 million LGBTQ+ veterans receiving healthcare from the VA, but there continues to be a pervasive lack of data collection on LGBTQ+ servicemembers and veteran populations and an absence of education on the LGBTQ+ community who serve in uniform.

I stand ready to pass this legislation so that even more veterans can experience the world-class care that all veterans are entitled to through the VA.

I say in closing that Pride Month is a time for celebration, but it is also a time for action. I thank all the speakers who joined in this Special Order hour to pay tribute to the LGBTQ+ community and to enunciate the work that is left to do.

Our speakers today have made clear the progress that we have made but also the work that we still need to do in order to achieve full equality.

This month and every month, the congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus stands in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people throughout the country and around the world. We will never stop fighting for your rights.

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

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ROY) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROY. Madam Speaker, as we will be recessing tomorrow for the week, next week many of us will be celebrating America's Independence Day back home in our districts and throughout the country.

Very few of us will be here. A few may, but we are rarely, if ever, on the floor of the U.S. House on Independence Day.

It is obviously a day not just worth celebrating but that the Founders intended specifically for us to celebrate.

I recall now 4 years ago in the summer of 2020 in the midst of some of the protests and riots and burning of buildings, tossing of statues and damaging of statues throughout the country in the summer of 2020, there was a lot of effort to tear down monuments and memorials.

I took my staff, and I drove to Philadelphia on July 2. We were here late right up through that day. I think we finished voting on July 1.

On July 2, I drove with my staff, I went to Philadelphia, and I went to Independence Hall and visited with the National Park Service there who were caring for Independence Hall.

Fortunately, there was nobody at that point threatening to damage Independence Hall. There were some rumors and concerns.

I recorded a video there and talked about the importance of Independence Hall. In that speech or in that video, when I recorded that, I pointed out that it wasn't the bricks and the mortar. It wasn't the building itself. It wasn't the structure.

That is all interesting to go see from a historic standpoint, but it was what those men did inside of Independence Hall that changed the course of history forever.

The National Park Service was very gracious. They allowed me and my staff, the three staff members with me, to go into Independence Hall on July 2.

We were alone. It was just us because it was closed down for public tours because you will remember, this was during the time of COVID.

We were able to be in Independence Hall on July 2. Now, why is that interesting? Because students of history will know that that was the actual monumental day.

That was the day that our leaders of the colonies, but the Founders of this country, the leaders broke away from the crown. That was the day that they voted.

On July 3, the next day, John Adams wrote a letter to his wife, Abigail, back home in Massachusetts. Remember, of course, he couldn't call her. He couldn't text her. He couldn't send her an email.

He wrote Abigail a letter that would get to her saying, "Yesterday, the greatest question was decided, which ever was debated in America, and a greater, perhaps, never was nor will be decided among men."

"A resolution was passed without one dissenting colony, 'that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, and as such they have, and of right ought to have, full power to make war, conclude peace, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which other States may rightfully do.'"

"The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival."

"It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore."

"You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and the blood, and treasure, that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States."

"Yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is more than worth all the means, and that posterity will triumph in that day's transaction, even although we should rue it, which I trust in God we shall not."

Again, that was July 3, 1776, the day after those men voted in Independence Hall to separate from the crown.

They had not yet adopted the Declaration of Independence. That would occur the following day on July 4, 1776.

Obviously, Mr. Adams thought July 2 would be the day that would be celebrated. Of course, as it turns out, because the Declaration was signed and dated July 4, that became the day on which we celebrate our independence and all that flows from it.

It might seem trivial, and in some respects, it is, so long as we are celebrating. In the midst of the parades and the fireworks and the hot dogs and the fun of next week, we should remember why. We should remember what Mr. Adams wrote to Abigail. We should remember what they sacrificed.

Much is made in this town often of the palace intrigue of what one Member says to another or who is endorsed by another. Much is made of relationships and who has angst with whom.

Shall we not remember that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were literally at each other's throats, fighting because they disagreed so vehemently about the power of government, Federal versus State?

Shall we not forget the duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton? Shall we not forget the massive disputes our country has wrestled with?

I will just say this: Gladly. It is one of the great things about this country that we, with passion, shall engage on behalf of the people that we represent to come here and fight for them, to stand up and do something that we said we would do when we came to this town to change the trajectory, to preserve the Republic that these gentlemen met and pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to defend. They meant that, and they knew what it meant.

I think it merits a debate here among our colleagues on both sides of the aisle in both Chambers, in the executive branch, in the judiciary.

What is it that we are doing? What are we doing on behalf of the people who sent us to this town? What animates us? Is it to get reelected? Is it to raise money? Is it to chair a committee? Is it to have a certain amount of power, or is it to fundamentally preserve and protect this great experiment for our children and our grandchildren? Is it to put all on the line?

Many great patriots in this Chamber wear the battle scars of lost eyes and lost legs, both sides of the aisle, for fighting and standing to defend this country and defend the flag that sits behind the Speaker's chair.

What are we doing? What are we doing as elected Members of Congress? I hear often now from people that I represent. I am tired of another sternly worded letter, and I am tired of yet another hearing when they see the country that they love being attacked, being attacked not by necessarily by enemies abroad but by our own people and in many cases our own leaders.

The people whom I represent who reach out to me, who pull me aside in an airport or pull me aside at home or pull me aside in the supermarket or at school when I drop my kids off, they don't come to me asking about some endorsement or some conversation had among Members of the floor.

They come to me, and they ask: Why am I not living free? What is happening? What is wrong with our country?

□ 1815

In this week in which we are going to celebrate freedom and celebrate independence, 248 years removed from what I just described in the letter from Mr. Adams to Mrs. Adams, are we free? It is a legitimate question. Are we a free people?

Some people might superficially just say well, sure, of course, you are free. You can walk out of the Chamber, Mr. ROY. You can walk out and say what you want, do what you want. Superficially speaking, compared to certain other places and times in history or other parts of the world, you could argue that we are free.

But are we free? Can we say what we want? Can we speak freely without the power of government being used against us? Can we pray at an abortion clinic without being put in jail for 2 years if you are 75 years old, as the Department of Justice just did?

Can you speak your mind and say that you believe in the institution of marriage without being threatened with losing your job or potentially punished with hate speech? Can you?

Can you speak freely about a man and a woman, the definition thereof, and that a man not be able to swim against a woman in a meet? You kind of can, but can you?

Can you send your kids to a school where your kids can pray to the God under which this Nation was founded? Can you, in that school, trust that your children are going to be taught the values of Western civilization and the founding principles that gave us this great country that indeed, ultimately, led to the abolition of slavery and freedom for people around the world?

Will you be taught about the bravery and courage of the men at Lexington and Concord, in Independence Hall, or in all the battlefields during the Civil War, World War I, or World War II and storming the beaches? Will you be taught about that great history, or will your kids be taught to apologize for being American?

Are you free if you are sending your kids to school with tax dollars for your children to be indoctrinated and taught that your Nation is not great or that your God does not exist? Are you free or are you slave to a tyranny of government that tells you that you must pay taxes to something that will save the secular world, itself its own religion, that that is something you must subsidize and you must bow down to?

Are you free if your military is more focused, as many reports have been showing, on advancing nonbinary, transgender, lesbian, gay issues than on a military focused on defending the United States of America?

Are you free if we are continuing to advance our military into war or fund wars abroad without actual declarations of war, with 20-something-year-old Authorizations for Use of Military Force without ever having a real, thorough, and full debate on the floor of

the House? Are you free if you are continually funding war to the detriment of your own financial well-being and the death and destruction of many of your own colleagues?

Are you free if your daughter can be registered to be drafted, as the United States Senate just voted to require out of the Senate Armed Services Committee and sent down to the floor, and many Republicans voted for? Are you free if your daughter can be forced to register for Selective Service and be drafted?

Are you free if you have \$35 trillion of debt and have \$1.1 trillion of interest, if you are racking up \$1 trillion of debt every 2 to 3 months? Are you free if the U.S. dollar is getting destroyed and you can't afford the groceries, the necessities of life, and the car to go take your family to their job or their school or to carry out your business if you are a plumber or an electrician or any other job? Are you free? Are you free if your leaders are spending your Nation into oblivion and undermining your economic freedom and well-being?

Are you free if your borders are so wide open that your own people are getting killed and murdered by those being let onto the streets out of the jail cells and the criminals from other parts of the world? Are you free? Do you think Laken Riley's parents feel free? Do you think the little 12-year-old girl who was just raped in Iowa by two illegal immigrants let into the United States and paroled by this administration, do you think they feel free? Do you think that the parents of the 13-year-old girl who was raped and murdered and the families of the Maryland women, Rachel Morin and Kayla Hamilton, these families who lost their loved ones, do you think they feel free? Without security, how are you free?

Do you think all the parents who have lost their loved ones to fentanyl poisoning, with fentanyl pouring into their communities, are free? Are we truly free?

Are you free to comment about Presidential elections without being targeted by the Department of Justice? Are you free to talk about schools without being targeted by the Department of Justice? Are you free to go forward and protest in favor of life without being targeted by the Department of Justice, as Mark Houck had happen to him?

Are you free to speak freely about the abuses of transgender surgeries in a hospital in Texas and Texas Children's Hospital and not have the Department of Justice come in and prosecute you, as just happened in Texas? Are you free?

Are you free if the Department of Justice wants to make you a criminal because you sell a single gun to another person in Texas and wants to create a national registry to be able to track those weapons? Are you free?

Are you free if you can't go buy the automobile of your choice because a bunch of people in Washington have

said, no, we have to regulate it, make it more expensive. We have to mandate electric vehicles, which are piling up on lots, and you can't afford the internal combustion engine that you used to be able to go get. Now, you are wondering how you are even going to replace the car you have that you need to get around to do your job and carry out your life.

Are you free? I would suggest to you that, in supposedly the freest and greatest country in the history of mankind, we are no longer free. I would suggest to you that, as we are heading into this week to celebrate the great birth of liberty that this country provided for the world, that we have been stripped of that liberty and that we have been trading it away, that we have been trading it away right here from the floor upon which I stand, and that we have done so even this year.

These are the questions with which we should wrestle. These are the great debates we should have.

I am exceptionally proud to be an American. I am exceptionally proud to be in Congress. I believe that this country can and must be free again, but a country that has no borders, a country that is \$35 trillion in debt, a country whose government is weaponized against its own people, a country that doesn't even know how to define "man" and "woman" or pay honor to the God upon which this Nation was founded is not a free country.

If we are going to do anything in this body as Republicans or Democrats, if we are going to do anything in this election cycle, if we are going to do anything at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, it should be to restore our fundamental, God-given rights and to reduce the size, scope, and power of a government that is operating completely in opposition to those liberties.

The people who struggle today in this country struggle primarily because of the government that is operating against them, not because the government is protecting or helping them. The people who struggle in this country today, it is because of a burdensome, large, indebted government that has lost sight of the reason it exists and the fact that it is through the consent of the governed that it has its power.

The other thing that happened on July Fourth, somewhat miraculously, was that both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams passed away 50 years to the day of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a document in which both had significant hands in writing, Jefferson obviously being the primary author.

On June 24, 1826, about 10 days before Jefferson died at his home in Monticello, he wrote the following to the Mayor of Washington upon having to decline the invitation to the 50th anniversary celebration due to his health, which obviously failed him 10 days later. He wrote, may our independence "be to the world what I believe it will

be (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form which we have substituted restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights and an undiminished devotion to them."

As we go out as Representatives of the people in this great Republic over the next week and go home to our districts, I hope we will remember those words, but that ultimately doesn't mean much. I hope that when we come back to this Chamber, we will remember those words.

I hope that as we form our plans for the coming years that we will embrace with the seriousness and resolve of all those we celebrate and to whom we give lip service of our great admiration for their sacrifice and their courage, whether they have worn the uniform and stormed the beaches at Normandy or they fought for our freedoms at our founding, or whether they were these men in that room, or whether they are those who came before us representing the people in this Chamber. It has to be more than just simple words of recognition.

It can't be a fancy celebration at an 80th anniversary of D-Day. We have to actually carry out those words of affection by being willing to sacrifice our own well-being and good for the next generation because that is what we have lost. We have lost the willingness to sacrifice at all so that the next generation might live free to give up the comforts of promises from a Federal Government, of continued checks, continued welfare, to give up the trappings of, frankly, a heavily falsified world of comfort in suburban America, propped up by profligate government spending, waiting, waiting to teeter off the edge.

This is not about personalities in this Chamber. This is not about someone being too caustic or mean to one of their colleagues. Grow up. Wake up. Understand your duty. Understand that when you come here and you swear an oath and you sit before that flag and you sit in this Chamber and all the speeches that come before it, that we owe it to all of those 400,000 at Arlington National Cemetery and the thousands of cemeteries across this country in which those who gave or were willing to give the last full measure of devotion, we owe it to them and those who risked it all to risk it all ourselves.

What good is an election certificate that we are unwilling to use in fullness?

□ 1830

This next week, I will look forward to riding in a parade in central Texas and celebrating with my 14-year-old, my 13-year-old, my wife, and my friends and family, just like everybody else, and I will have a good time doing it.

When we come back here on July 8, let us set out to do the hard work that is actually required; not the pointing of fingers, not the recriminations, but actually set out to do the things we said we would do to cut the profligate spending; to secure the border of the United States; to make our military the strongest military they can be, sparingly used, giving them care when they get home, the tools to carry out their jobs; giving you healthcare freedom, going to the doctor of your choice; and giving you energy freedom, being able to get reliable energy and the cars of your choice without dictates from the bureaucrats in this town that are crushing the American Dream.

America is going to turn 250 years old in 2 years. As a birthday present for America turning 250 years old, are we going to give our kids and our grandkids their birthright or are we going to take it away from them?

I hope it is the former.

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

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 870.—An act to authorize appropriations for the United States Fire Administration and firefighter assistance grant programs, to advance the benefits of nuclear energy, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ROY. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, June 28, 2024, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

EC-4619. A letter from the Program Analyst, Federal Grain Inspection Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's interim rule — Fees for Official Inspection and Weighing Services Under the United States Grain Standards Act [Doc. No.: AMS-FGIS-24-0010] (RIN: 0581-AE28) received June 7, 2024, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

EC-4620. A letter from the OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final