

cannabis businesses two or three times higher than regular businesses. No wonder they can't compete with the black market.

We have a situation now where the State-legal cannabis companies have to pay their taxes with shopping bags full of \$20 bills, because we still deny them access to banking services. That is not just unfair; it is insane. It promotes money laundering, and it inhibits the opportunity of enterprises that are legal now for most Americans for either medical or adult use.

It is time that the Federal Government get its act together and stop making these problems worse. The Biden administration has taken some halting, positive steps, pardoning people who didn't need to be caught up in this in the first place, and they are looking at rescheduling cannabis to make it easier to do the research, and it would overnight end the unfair taxing situation. They would be able to deduct their business expenses. How novel. It is time for Congress to stop making this problem worse.

The Federal Government created the situation with the failed war on drugs, unfair to millions of Americans, and denied an opportunity for something that the American public has demonstrated time after time they want to happen by their State votes legalizing it.

It is not too late for this Congress to take the legislation that we have in the process to solve this problem, to be fair in the failed war on drugs, be able to allow State-legal businesses to not be at a disadvantage to the cartels and the cheaters, and get this right.

After 50 years, it is time to finally end the failed war on drugs and be fair to the American people.

Let's reflect for a moment on the cost of our failure to act on the critical cannabis reform proposals before this Congress.

Tens of millions of Americans have been trapped by the deplorable failed war on drugs and archaic prohibition of marijuana.

While this prohibition has harmed Americans across the board, it has not been enforced equally.

In every single state, Black people are more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than their white neighbors.

Black people are more than three times as likely than whites to be arrested for marijuana possession, despite comparable usage rates.

The public finally recognizes this injustice.

Ending to this failed policy is more popular than ever before.

Seventy percent of Americans support legalizing marijuana, including majorities of Republicans and Independents as well as Democrats.

It is states, led by my home state of Oregon, that have led the way to end this prohibition.

Twenty-four states and multiple territories having legalized adult-use marijuana.

Many of these states have worked valiantly to make these markets accessible to those directly impacted, especially communities harmed in the weaponization of marijuana prohibition.

They have invested in equity licensing structures, tax relief, and more.

However, it is clear, that without a comprehensive federal framework for legalization, these programs will continue to fall woefully short.

A state-by-state patchwork of legalization doesn't work.

To meaningfully address the harms facing our communities—particularly Black and Brown Americans targeted in federal cannabis prohibition—we must act on the critical proposals before this Congress.

Obviously the MORE Act is the gold standard for comprehensive reform. This critical legislation:

- Deschedules marijuana;
- Expunges prior convictions;
- Implements a real federal tax structure for these products;

- Makes SBA funds available to these small businesses; and

- Invests in programs that minimize barriers to marijuana licensing and employment for the individuals most adversely impacted by the failed war on drugs.

The House has twice passed this legislation with bipartisan support. It is devastating that the Senate has failed to act.

The SAFE Banking Act makes banking services available to regulated marijuana businesses—denying the benefits that keep employees safe and lower costs for vulnerable small businesses by getting cash off the streets.

The Veterans Equal Access Act allows veterans to work with their preferred providers to decide if medical marijuana is the right treatment option for them instead of denying them their preferred provider for care.

And, finally, perhaps most important for struggling cannabis businesses is tax reform.

Under Section 280E of the federal tax code, marijuana businesses are not able to deduct any business expenses from their federal taxes.

This exponentially increases their tax burden compared to other regulated businesses.

My Small Business Tax Equity Act would end this inequity, making it far more accessible for small businesses to enter the legal marijuana markets and fairly compete with the illicit market.

While Congress considers these critical pieces of legislation, President Biden has taken some action to address the ongoing harms of criminalization.

In 2022, he issued thousands of pardons for simple federal marijuana possession convictions and challenged governors across the country to do the same for state convictions.

This past December, he expanded this relief to convictions in D.C. and to those with federal convictions for attempted possession of marijuana.

For the people eligible, these pardons are tremendously impactful—restoring their rights to education and housing and so much more.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has also confirmed their authority to deschedule marijuana.

Descheduling marijuana will allow full deduction of costs of marijuana business.

Allowing these businesses to deduct their expenses as the tax code was intended will help level the playing field for those who do not have the benefit of existing dominance in the industry.

Descheduling is a vital, common-sense leap forward that will make the federal government the partner our states and communities need to address the ongoing harms of our failed cannabis policies.

Congress must act on the common-sense reforms to meaningfully end the failed war on drugs and repair the harms caused by a state-by-state patchwork of marijuana legalization.

It is past time for simple bipartisan reform.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO PAULA TROUTMAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. LANGWORTHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to a remarkable individual whose impact on western New York, the southern tier, and our educational system is immeasurable. Paula J. Troutman, the beloved principal of Fredonia Middle School, left us unexpectedly on New Year's Day at the age of 60.

I have had the honor to know Paula Troutman and her beautiful family since the late 1990s when I was a student at Pine Valley High School. Her passing has left a void that is deeply felt by her family, her friends, her colleagues, and the thousands of students whose lives she touched.

Paula Troutman was a lifelong educator, a coach, a school administrator, and a proud alumnus of Pine Valley Central School who went on to teach young people in her hometown. She ultimately went on to be the principal of Fredonia Middle School.

In our small towns in the southern tier, our schools are the epicenter of our communities, and Paula Troutman was a community leader who touched many, many lives.

Her ultimate legacy is her beautiful family. Married for 40 years to her husband, Dan, they operated a family farm. They have four amazing children, Danielle, Courtney, Justina, and Cody, all of which have followed in their mother's footsteps in education or coaching. Paula was a loving grandmother to six beautiful grandchildren.

A shocked community is mourning her sudden passing, expressing their love and support for her family, and also reflecting on the leadership role she played for many in the community.

Fredonia Central School District Superintendent Brad Zilliox aptly captured Paula's essence, stating: "It is Paula's impact on fostering relationships, a work family, that our staff is leaning on as strength to be there for our students and each other."

Colleagues and friends have shared heartwarming stories of Paula's unwavering support and genuine care. From reassuring a worried mother about a school transition to coaching with passion and dedication, Paula left an enduring mark on the lives of those around her.

As we mourn the loss of Paula Troutman, we remember her not only for her

professional accomplishments but for the kindness and understanding that made her a cherished figure in the lives of many.

In one of her very last social media posts, Paula Troutman said her new year's resolution for 2024 was to "Love More." I think that is a resolution that we could all strive for. In her passing, it is clear that she gave her community and those around her a lot of love, and those people that she touched truly loved her back.

Mr. Speaker, my thoughts and prayers go out to Paula's family during this very difficult time. May her legacy inspire us to embrace the values that she held dear, values of compassion, dedication, and the unwavering belief in the transformative power of education.

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HONORING SERGEANT PHILIP DALE NIX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the late Sergeant Philip Dale Nix of the Greensboro Police Department.

On December 30, Sergeant Nix, while off duty, was at a gas station, where he saw three young people stealing several cases of beer. When he approached the robbers' car, the 18-year-old thief shot Sergeant Nix five times, killing him for over less than \$100 worth of beer.

Dale Nix's loss is a tragedy that has been a terrible blow to Greensboro and the Triad. Our entire community is grieving, from his fellow officers and emergency responders, to those he helped at the Guilford County Family Justice Center, to people across the city who, like me, are shocked and saddened over the loss of this fine man.

Sergeant Nix joined the Greensboro Police Department in 2001, where he served our community with distinction for 22 years. As mentioned at our recent community vigil by so many of his colleagues, Sergeant Nix was a standout leader. He went above and beyond in all his roles on the force and was dedicated to justice and helping others.

In his 22 years on the force, Sergeant Nix served as a Criminal Investigation Division detective, a patrol corporal, patrol sergeant, team leader for the peer support team for 12 years, assistant team leader of the GPD Honor Guard, and his latest assignment was as detective sergeant of the Family Victims Unit, where he worked closely with the Family Justice Center, helping victims of crimes, particularly women and children, who were the victims of domestic violence.

As Catherine Johnson, who runs the Family Justice Center, said at the vigil, Dale Nix had an extraordinary ability to connect with people, espe-

cially people in pain. He was able to work so well with the victims of crimes because he listened to them. He gained their trust. They knew he would fight for them because they knew he cared.

The impact Sergeant Nix made on families in Greensboro is incalculable. The stories have poured in from people he impacted, stories that have been both heartwarming and heartbreaking. Here was a man who was devoted to others, a man who made a real difference, whose ability to help those in need was cut far too short.

In addition to his valiant service to our community, Dale Nix was a beloved husband and father, a true family man. At this difficult time, my heart breaks for his wife, son, parents, and his entire family. I share my condolences with the Greensboro Police Department, the fire department, the 911 emergency center, those at the Family Justice Center, and all who served with him.

Sergeant Nix was a man of integrity, family, and service. He protected the innocent, advocated for victims, and made a difference in countless lives. It is truly tragic that, while Sergeant Nix dedicated his career to preventing crimes and helping victims, he lost his life to violent criminals.

As a Member of Congress and a member of the Greensboro community, I am outraged by the act of senseless violence that stole Sergeant Nix's life. I will continue to use my role in Congress and in my community to work towards solutions that will stop this painful cycle of violence that has claimed far too many innocent lives.

I know that Sergeant Nix's legacy will live on. He will long be remembered as a father, a husband, a man of integrity and service, an advocate, a true hero, and a pillar of justice in Greensboro, North Carolina.

May his memory be a blessing to all.

A CALL TO CHAMPION FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Mr. CLYDE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on this body to champion fiscal responsibility.

It is no secret that the U.S. is steamrolling its way to fiscal ruin, rapidly barreling toward economic collapse and unfairly burdening future generations, yet few here in Washington seem to notice this fiscal calamity, let alone care enough to fix it. Far too many have not only become numb to our ballooning national debt and out-of-control deficit, but completely addicted to spending money that we simply don't have.

The U.S. national debt climbs higher every second, swelling at such an alarming rate that hitting new trillion-dollar milestones has now become routine. In fact, in June, just 7 months ago, the national debt reached \$32 trillion. This figure surged to \$33 trillion 3 months later in September, and, just

days ago, in just another 3.5 months, our national debt surpassed \$34 trillion, amounting to roughly \$100,000 for every American, for our constituents.

Racking up more than \$2 trillion in national debt in just 7 months' time is not a historic milestone; it is a historic failure. At this rate, we are adding roughly a trillion dollars to our national debt every 90 days—think about that—a trillion dollars every 90 days, setting us up to hit, if not exceed, \$37 trillion by the end of the fiscal year. Unsustainable is an understatement.

Every solitary Member should be enraged by this ill-fated trend, but despite all the warning signs, it is business as usual here in Washington, as evidenced by the recently announced agreement on the overall price tag for fiscal year 2024 appropriations.

Make no mistake, the bipartisan spending deal is a total sham. No amount of smoke and mirrors can hide the swamp's irresponsible, wasteful, and reckless spending agenda. While leaders from both parties claimed that the top-line spending level matches the \$1.59 trillion statutory cap set last year by the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the true total of programmatic spending is actually more than \$68 billion higher at \$1.658 trillion.

The statutory FRA cap, which, in my opinion, is already far too high, should have been the ceiling, not the floor, to hide or excuse this excessive spending. That is right: New year, same uniparty.

I vehemently oppose this sham bipartisan spending deal, and I am deeply disappointed that, yet again, at President Biden and Senate Leader SCHUMER's pleasure, critical leverage and key policy wins were abandoned.

My constituents didn't send me here to greenlight more of the swamp's spending as usual, exacerbate our national debt, or concede in conservative policy battles. They sent me here to change the course of Congress, to change the status quo.

I am fighting to do just that, but, if we are ever going to save our Nation, economy, and future generations from financial failure, we need more Republicans in both Chambers to join the fight. After all, we should be far more afraid of fiscal calamity than fighting the swamp.

Therefore, I urge my colleagues to take our rapidly approaching financial ruin seriously by rejecting this irresponsible deal. Let's champion fiscal responsibility and return fiscal sanity to Washington by cutting spending, not carrying on business as usual while our fiscal House falls into a sinkhole of skyrocketing debt.

IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, now that we are back in Washington and starting some very serious conversations, I wanted to make clear where I stand on