

than that. If we allowed trucks and trains to be replaced by attrition over time with the clean technology, we would see dramatic gains.

If we achieved 99 percent in cleanliness from, say, 1950 or 1960 to now, that last 1 percent is the one that is acutely hard to achieve and hyper-expensive to get that last 1 percent, but the regulators are hell-bent all the time on trying to get that last 1 percent.

Why can't we move toward having everything hit that first level at 99, whether it is clean engines or what have you, on that, and achieve that goal and see where we are?

That is because the more we export our industry and the more we export agriculture to other countries, they do it much, much dirtier, if you want to put it that way, than us. Coal, for example, used to be a cornerstone of our energy grid in this country. It is dissipating, yet China builds more coal power plants every month, and they don't really care about environmental stuff like we do.

□ 1800

We are looking for reasonable environmental regulations, and sometimes it goes too far. They don't care.

Remember when they had the Olympics? They shut down the country for about 2 or 3 weeks beforehand so the air would clean up enough and it would look good on TV and the athletes wouldn't choke to death, but then right back to business as usual afterwards.

A coherent energy policy means, yes, we need to be extracting oil and gas from the lands we have, whether private or Federal, and it can be done ecologically soundly. We don't have to be scared to death.

The ANWR, the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, is the size of South Carolina. It is massive. The area where they want to do the extraction is a tiny postage-stamp size compared to that. Yet, we are going to ruin the whole thing, so it is disingenuous.

Energy policy will help bring things back in line costwise. Coupled with restraint on government spending, that is how we can solve a whole bunch of the inflation problems for regular Americans who are struggling.

Look to a better energy policy, whether it is oil and gas, whether it is not tearing out our hydroelectric power—there are aspirations to tear out dams all the time these days—or building more nuclear power plants. Small modular reactors are really going to be the way to go.

Guess what? With hydro plants, no CO<sub>2</sub>; with nuclear plants, no CO<sub>2</sub>. If you are worried about CO<sub>2</sub>, those are good ways to not have it.

Instead, for example, in the San Joaquin Valley in California, where they are taking away so much of the water and the land values are deteriorating rapidly because they are covered up with what they are calling solar farms. There are acres and acres and acres of these plastic panels out there that will

have maybe a 20-year or 25-year life, at best. Maybe you should call it a half-life like nuclear. Then they all have to be disposed of.

Agriculture has been displaced. The best breadbasket in this country has been displaced by having a noncoherent energy policy, but whatever feels good.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to solve these problems for American consumers, middle-income and lower-income American families, these are what we need to attack.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding the time.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, as always, I appreciate the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) and his thoughtful, but yet frustratingly common voice on energy policy.

I thank my colleagues for being here tonight and taking the time to speak on some of these priorities the House Republicans are focused on as we look forward to the 119th Congress, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, House Republicans are pushing legislation to reform the United States tax code, to protect American hostages abroad, and support our domestic energy industry.

Currently, there are approximately 46 Americans wrongfully detained or held hostage abroad, and our tax code does not provide any relief beyond 1 year for detainees.

The Stop Terror-Financing and Tax Penalties on American Hostages Act works to support Americans by preventing the IRS from charging late fees and penalties to U.S. citizens wrongfully detained abroad. This bill also revokes the tax-exempt status of U.S. nonprofit organizations that provide financial or material support to terrorist groups like Hamas.

This is the most commonsense legislation that we are going to see in the lameduck period, and I am hopeful to see this through the legislative process entirely as it passes the House.

Americans should not be penalized for being held hostage by adversaries abroad, and this bill is a necessary step toward ensuring detainees and hostages are able to focus on safely returning home and reuniting with their families.

This week, House Republicans successfully passed the Committing Leases for Energy Access Now Act to require the Department of the Interior to increase the frequency of geothermal leases, the lease sales, from every 2 years to every year. It also includes holding a replacement sale, if necessary, and creates decision deadlines for geothermal drilling permit applications.

This bill emphasizes a robust energy policy that unleashes our Nation's energy potential, reduces reliance on foreign energy sources, and cuts back against onerous red tape that slows down energy production.

House Republicans know that we have a lot of work to do, and we are committed to using our constituents'

voices as our guide as we reverse the Biden-Harris administration's failed policies and protect American citizens, restore American energy independence, and lower energy costs for American workers and their families.

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

#### RESTORE THE AMERICAN DREAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DELUZIO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DELUZIO. Mr. Speaker, the American people are sick and tired of powerful corporations ripping us off, junk fees, small businesses struggling, union busting, price gouging, bad trade deals, all of it.

I am convening this Special Order hour today because I am committed to fighting back. I am here because we need to revive and restore and strengthen the American Dream for all who are willing to work for it. I know my constituents are. I know the American people want more from this body.

In the depths of the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt confronted these same forces in a different time head-on, saying: "These economic royalists complain that we seek to overthrow the institutions of America. What they really complain of is that we seek to take away their power."

Absolutely. There is no freedom if families are struggling to meet basic needs. There is no liberty if we are ruled by oligarchs. No one is going to say that profits don't matter; they do.

Something else has to matter more: Our safety has to matter. Our jobs have to matter. Our communities have to matter. This country has to matter.

For those things to matter, we have to break this corporate stranglehold on our economy and our country. The American economy works just great if you are a billionaire or if you are a giant corporation, but too often our system fails hardworking people.

We need an economy and a government that rewards hard work, not just extreme wealth.

Where I come from and where I grew up, that is something that we value. I represent the good people of the 17th District of Pennsylvania, western Pennsylvania. We believe in hard work. We believe in patriotism. We believe in sacrifice.

We are the folks who made the steel that built this country. We have answered the call in every war. We have

done hard work, like so many across this country have done. We saw a story that rewarded that sacrifice with trying to strip us for parts; shipping good jobs away overseas; gobbling up small businesses, squeezing them; seeing big, powerful corporations put their lust for profit ahead of our safety.

We have to stand strong against those forces, a lot of them created by corporate power that are making life worse for people. It is making life more expensive and too expensive.

If American capitalism is going to succeed, we have to have competition. We have to take on anticompetitive monopolies, give small businesses and entrepreneurs a shot to succeed and compete, and make sure that our safety and our communities aren't collateral damage in the way of profits and make sure that workers have some say and dignity on the job and the freedom and forum to join a union.

The American Dream has been snatched away from far too many Americans who are hardworking, who are good and decent people, who want to have a shot at dignity and security. It is a devastating reality for folks to live with. It is unacceptable to me. I know it is unacceptable to many in this Chamber.

Some folks are angry about it. They are sad. They should be. They should expect more of this body, and they should expect more of their government.

I think we need to lay a path back to the American Dream. I am honored to be joined by so many colleagues tonight who will join me in this fight to restore and strengthen the American Dream. With a strong economic message of taking on corporate power, local action, being unafraid to fight the bad guys when we need to, we can deliver for the American people to bring down costs, to reward hard work, and to make life better and cheaper.

We can make sure the American Dream is revived and strong for generations to come.

I am proud to yield time to one of my colleagues from just next door, the great State of Ohio (Mr. LANDSMAN).

Mr. LANDSMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for hosting tonight.

It is crystal clear that people are frustrated. They are frustrated with politics. They are frustrated with the economy, and they want costs down and an economy that is built for working people, the middle class, and our small businesses. I think it is really important for us to have this conversation and to start with the reality.

The reality is that the system is rigged, and it has been rigged for decades. It works for the superwealthy while everyone else is left behind, facing higher prices and a tax system that helps the rich get richer.

This started in the 1980s with huge tax giveaways to the wealthy while gutting oversight and regulations.

The result is that the system is producing the outcomes it was designed to

produce. The top 1 percent in the United States now holds 12 times the wealth of the bottom half of American households. That is what this system produced.

Think about that: 1 percent of Americans own more wealth than half of all American families combined.

When people look at their bank accounts, they are frustrated and when they get their grocery bill and their tax bill and they are wondering where all their money went, they know. They see on their phones and on the news how rich the rich have gotten. That is where their money has gone.

The superwealthy and powerful have seized more and more of our money and more and more of our power.

Let me say that again: The superwealthy and powerful have seized more and more of our money and more and more of our power.

Since the pandemic, billionaires have become \$3 trillion richer. Their wealth has grown three times faster than inflation. Corporate profits have gone up 54 percent. Wages have only gone up 26 percent.

Mr. Speaker, what is Congress' solution?

The 2017 Trump tax bill was a massive handout to corporations and billionaires. The majority of the benefits went almost entirely to the top 1 percent, and it added \$2 trillion to the national debt.

Here in these Halls, folks want to do it again. Members of Congress who have continually bent a knee to billionaires and their corporate PAC donors are now going to take their money, follow their orders, and give them the tax giveaways they want. They are going to gut regulation and allow for more corporate consolidation, which means that consumers lose more and more power in the marketplace and pay more and more for goods and services.

I don't accept corporate PAC money because I know that my constituents expect us to be with them, not the superwealthy.

Most politicians, unfortunately, do take corporate PAC money, and I believe it is one of the reasons why there is so much pushback to Medicare negotiating lower prescription drug prices or attempts to privatize Medicare or any effort to pursue commonsense gun reform. Think about how much the gun manufacturers make. It is billions and billions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, many of them are all in on spending trillions on the superwealthy through tax reform because it helps their own interests. It is not what people want.

People are struggling, and they want change. They are tired of the status quo. They are saying that over and over. For decades, that is what they have been given. We have appeased billionaires and big corporations while leaving working people, the middle class, and small businesses behind.

In the next Congress, we have an opportunity to pass a new tax bill. What

if 100 percent of all tax reform benefits went to working people, the middle class, and small businesses?

The last time Congress passed a big tax bill, almost 90 percent went to the top 1 percent. What if 100 percent of any tax cuts went to working people, the middle class, and small businesses? It should be paid for by making the superwealthy just pay all their taxes, just like the rest of us.

Big corporations and the superwealthy don't need our tax cuts. The middle class, small businesses, and working people need them. By giving people enough money to support their families, pay for their groceries, and contribute to our economy, we are all better off.

Everyone at the top should pay all of their taxes so every American can pay all their bills.

Mr. DELUZIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for his words.

The gentleman is right. We have to confront this corporate power. We have to build an economy and a government that rewards hard work, not just obscene wealth. We talk about how we all feel that squeeze. We feel that power hurting us.

We all hear from our constituents about the cost of groceries and the cost of food. They don't have a choice to not feed their families. We are feeling it and we are hearing constantly about the pressure folks are under to make ends meet and to put food on the table.

People's paychecks aren't going as far in the grocery store and the checkout line. It hurts budgets. It hurts families.

They are asking: Who is responsible? Why is this happening?

No doubt, a few years back, food and grocery supply chains were affected by the pandemic, but a Federal Trade Commission Report made clear that the disruptions from the pandemic disproportionately impacted small firms because larger companies tried successfully to protect their power and their market share.

□ 1815

There is very little competition across much of the grocery sector. It is not marked by heavy competition. The four biggest grocery retailers account for nearly 70 percent of sales across the country.

Among food suppliers, four firms control more than 60 percent of sales in most grocery categories. That is not terribly competitive.

Without real competition, large grocers and retailers have got power to—guess what—set prices that we all pay for. We have seen price gouging by these corporations well above the level of inflation.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL), who I acknowledge and know has been fighting hard against not just corporate power, but to bring down costs for folks, especially in the grocery stores.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for yielding. I am so grateful for his leadership every single day on behalf of hardworking Americans across his district and across our country.

Mr. Speaker, something is wrong in this country. Families go to the grocery store and they can't afford milk or eggs or cereal that their kids like. Poor and working-class people are struggling under the weight of inflation. They can't make ends meet, and at the same time, the richest 1 percent and corporate CEOs are still taking home record profits.

A recent poll confirmed that two-thirds of Americans think: one of the biggest problems facing us today is that a handful of corporations have too much power. The numbers back this up.

Despite rising costs that are squeezing poor and working people across the country, corporate profits are bigger than ever. It is a simple story of corporate monopolies price gouging consumers.

Let's start with eggs because I like to eat eggs every morning. I think there are a lot of people who like eggs and look at the price of eggs. It is a staple.

Before the pandemic, the price of a dozen eggs hardly ever went over three bucks, but in 2022 and 2023, we saw record-high prices for eggs.

Now, according to Farm Action, this price increase was because dominant egg producers used inflation and avian flu as a cover-up to extract profit margins as high as—wait for it—40 percent on a dozen eggs.

This should come as no surprise because there is a long record of collusion in the egg industry. In 2023, a jury found that Cal-Maine and other egg producers actually did collude to fix egg prices.

Let's look at diapers, another issue that is so big for so many families across the country.

Bloomberg reported in July 2021 that the cost of Pampers nearly doubled from 25 bucks for 200 diapers to \$40 for 168 diapers, and that price increase was just in 6 months. More money for fewer diapers.

It is true that there was a shortage of some diaper materials during the pandemic, but—guess what—those shortages stopped, and you didn't see the prices stabilize. You didn't see the prices of key materials coming back to normal.

When you go to the store and you see diaper brands like Huggies and Luvs and Pampers, the real story is, turn them around and see who they are owned by because all of these different brands that are on your grocery shelves are owned by only two companies: Procter & Gamble and Kimberly-Clark, accounting for about 70 to 80 percent of the market. Even as the cost to make diapers has gone way down, these companies are still keeping the prices high, and they are reporting record profits.

Mr. Speaker, I will go to healthcare because it is another place where my constituents and people across the country are talking about the high cost of healthcare. We have seen big insurers, private equity, and other big corporations buying up hospitals and other healthcare providers. My home State of Washington has been particularly affected. A handful of healthcare systems now control 90 percent of the hospital beds in the State of Washington.

Some studies have found that these mergers are especially bad for people in rural areas because it actually causes smaller clinics to eliminate services like obstetrics or pediatrics, or even to close entirely. All of this has led to unprecedented corporate control over healthcare in my home State and across the country.

People across the State and across the country are seeing the negative effects of this increased corporate power in their daily lives. A family physician who worked at a clinic in my district testified that the quality and availability of care decreased after the clinic was bought by a large national healthcare network. Another witness testified that the price that her insurer paid for monthly infusions to manage her chronic illness nearly tripled from \$24,000 to \$74,000 per visit without any increase in the quality of care.

The president of the Washington State Nurses Association testified that he had seen increased costs and decreased access to care for his patients. All of these stories confirm what we now know: Corporate greed in healthcare or in any industry raises costs and makes life harder for Americans.

It does not have to be this way. As elected officials, it is our job to ensure that government is keeping these corporations in line and keeping prices low for the American people.

I will tell you a story about what government can do when we fight corporate power. In 2015, two grocery store chains merged: Albertsons and Safeway. They wanted what corporations always want in these big mergers and that is more money for themselves, their CEOs, and their shareholders. They said that the deal would be better for people in my home State of Washington and across the country. They claimed that the merger would pass on savings to consumers and not line the pockets of CEOs, but what actually happened?

Well, here is what actually happened: Instead of streamlining, dozens of stores were closed. Those closures created food and pharmacy deserts, making it harder for many people in already underserved communities to get fresh food or get their prescriptions. Older adults, students, people with disabilities, people in rural communities, low-income residents, those are the ones that suffered the most. Workers at the stores that closed, by the way, also lost their jobs. Despite all of those

corporate promises, workers and consumers were the ones who suffered. That is what happens when government does not challenge corporate power and monopolies. We lose.

When Albertsons announced in 2022 that it was going to merge this time with Kroger, people were rightly worried. They were worried that the prices would go up, they were worried that there would be fewer choices and deserts in their communities, and that more grocery stores would close. When asked about the merger, one Washingtonian told *The Seattle Times* that she was worried that her local store would close. She said: If there are no other grocery stores that I can walk to, I don't know what I am going to do. This is my store. Another said that he worried that the merger would make it so that these guys' prices would go sky-high. Workers worried that it would be harder for them to bargain for better pay and working conditions, that store closures would mean layoffs, and that their families would face uncertainty and hardship once again.

This time something was different. My colleagues and I urged the Biden administration to challenge the proposed deal, and the Federal Trade Commission agreed that we could not allow another bad merger to go through.

The FTC and many State attorneys general, including in my State, challenged the deal. While that challenge is still in court, we have delayed and will continue to work on blocking this bad deal.

This is just one of the stories of what can happen when an administration, when a government takes on corporate greed the way that the Biden-Harris administration did, the way that Democrats have done on everything from egg prices to collusion by landlords driving up rental prices.

I will be honest, I am worried that the Trump administration may not keep up these fights against corporate power, especially as we see the proposed cabinet being stacked with people who have close ties to Wall Street. We certainly saw the last Trump administration conduct the largest corporate tax giveaway in history, putting hundreds of millions of dollars into the hands of big corporations like Verizon and Facebook and Amazon while shorting regular Americans.

We have seen the extreme conservative appointees on the Supreme Court accept lavish gifts from their big business buddies, while overturning government efforts to clamp down on corporate power.

We cannot allow the next administration to repeat these mistakes. We need to hold their feet to the fire. We need to make sure that they are working in the interest of all Americans, not just big corporations and the wealthy. We don't want a situation where the wealthiest in this country, once again, get gold bars and working people get maybe 8 weeks of groceries. That is bread crumbs. That is not what middle-

class working people and poor people across America deserve.

That is why I have a lot of real solutions to these problems. My Stop Corporate Capture Act would give the people, not big corporations, a say in government. My Stop Anticompetitive Healthcare Act would give the government the power to challenge hospital mergers and protect access to quality healthcare. Of course, my Ultra-Millionaire Tax Act would make sure that the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share.

When we take on corporate power, we win for the working people. When we lower prices, we win for working people. We allow people to put food on their table. We can raise wages, so Americans don't have to work three jobs to get by. We can stop corporations from being so big that they don't care if they are failing consumers, and we can make sure that government works for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague Representative DELUZIO from Pennsylvania for his leadership on this issue and on so many issues facing us today.

Mr. DELUZIO. Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank the gentlewoman from Washington for her strong leadership and fight against these horrible mergers that are anticompetitive that we are all paying for and for so much fight on behalf of working people across this country.

We know that when corporations throw their weight around, all too often our constituents are hurt, small businesses are hurt, and workers are hurt. It is also dangerous at times. We know that when there are monopolies, our supply chains are weaker. There is more likely to be something that happens that might hurt us.

I am reminded of the baby formula shortage we saw in this country in the early part of 2022. It was set off because Abbott Labs, a company that dominates that industry, had a recall of its formula due to dangerous bacteria outbreak in one factory. Multiple babies died.

They had to shut down their factory in Michigan. It was a horrible situation. Shutting down just one factory, one, caused a nationwide shortage. In many places, store shelves were bare. Families were scrambling across the country, particularly families with babies that had special dietary needs. Delaware, Kansas, and Tennessee reported to be the hardest hit States. We felt it in places like Pennsylvania. My then-young son wasn't quite a year old. My own family worried about whether we could find formula and thank goodness we could.

There is research saying that some of those impacts might be still ongoing, that infant health suffered during this shortage, that babies may still feel the effects of that. Our supply chains can never be so weak that one single factory can cause such havoc all over the country.

It is not just that these powerful companies make our supply chains

weaker, they distort our democracy. They weaken faith in our elections. They corrupt with the money through our elections and our campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ), who I know is a hard fighter for campaign finance reform and to protect this democracy.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman DELUZIO for convening this Special Order hour, and I am grateful it is on a topic that I believe is so critical to so many of the conversations that we are having right now.

You are talking about babies still impacted. You brought me back to thinking about what it was like for me growing up. I grew up in Humboldt Park in the city of Chicago. I saw my immigrant parents work pretty long hours in minimum wage jobs. My dad worked two jobs, my mom worked two jobs, and somehow she also managed to give a lot of time to her local church.

What they couldn't afford was childcare. My mother worked first shift so my dad could work third shift, and they could figure out how to make sure that their kids always had someone at home. That meant that my parents could barely ever see each other.

My parents' experience is not very different from the reality of so many others right now. I witnessed the struggles of my community to secure stable housing, to ensure quality education for their children, and to raise a family with the rising cost of living.

Let me be very clear: Working people are still struggling. The cost of living in America is too damn high. Too often I hear my constituents, my neighbors talk about having to make a decision: Can I go to the grocery store and buy the eggs and the milk, try to get some spinach, try to get the bread, pay the \$2,200 a month for a two-bedroom apartment in Chicago, and then afford my inhaler?

Mr. Speaker, oftentimes what ends up happening is that people have to choose between being able to feed their children and their healthcare, feeding their children and an inhaler in one of the richest countries in the whole world. Why is it so hard for us to move a working people's agenda in Congress? You would think there is more of us that come from working class than ever before. Some of us actually understand what it is like to have to help our parents who are probably making \$100 too much for Medicaid so they need help covering their healthcare.

□ 1830

There are more of us here who are working class, but somehow a working people's agenda in this place doesn't seem to be a priority.

We ask ourselves: Why don't the American people trust that we are working for them?

Well, let me answer that question. When unchecked corporate power and greed in the marketplace meets un-

checked corporate money in politics, well, we have a problem. It is the families in Illinois' Third, Fourth, Fifth, in your own districts, who end up suffering because of it.

We know that price gouging, price-fixing, predatory algorithms, and corporate monopolies put profits and production over people. It is why I joined my colleagues in sending a letter, that Congresswoman JAYAPAL was just talking about, opposing the Kroger-Albertsons merger, because we have to resist the consolidation of corporate power if we are going to protect working people.

I am also a proud cosponsor of Congresswoman OMAR's Shrinkflation Reduction Act which would enhance price transparency for consumers and combat the deceptive practice of shrinkflation.

I go to my local grocery store. I can literally see the difference between what people in my community are paying and what someone else in a community that has four grocery stores pays. They usually pay 25 percent more. We need the kind of accountability that bills like this will bring.

Shrinkflation practices hide behind the language of inflation, but we know that actually consumer exploitation is intended to defraud us so corporations can continue to profit, while providing less product.

We know how corporations are able to get away with these practices. It is because they use their profits to buy the same exact people who are responsible for holding them accountable. Yes, I said it. Big money in politics, whether poured into elections or directly in the pockets of corrupt public servants, give special interests and corporations outsized influence in our democracy.

So when a good bill comes before us, when a good bill comes to the committee, somehow we can't actually debate the bill because it is a good bill. It should pass. These corporations have the power to buy elections and buy elected officials.

Our democracy is weaker and our communities suffer when the voices of working families are buried under the influence that millions can buy. We see it too often. It is why we need bills like H.R. 1118, the DISCLOSE Act, to end the scourge of dark money buying our democracy.

I am a cosponsor of the act that Representative PAPPAS introduced because it does a couple of things. It requires super-PACs and dark money groups to disclose donors who have given \$10,000 or more during an election cycle. It requires those spending money on ads to disclose their donors. It cracks down on the use of shell corporations to hide the identity of a donor.

If you are donating to an elected official or candidate, the public should know who you are. The DISCLOSE Act bill does just that. If our democracy is not for sale, which it shouldn't be for sale, then mega-donors should not be

attempting to buy our democracy. It means we have to bring the full power of the Federal Government through regulations, through accountability, and through transparency to fight for working people, for our constituents.

It is also why I think it is so important that we are cosponsoring legislation like Congresswoman JAYAPAL's bill, which is the Stop Corporate Capture Act, H.R. 1507. This bill institutes reforms to rightsize the influence of corporate interests over regulatory process, it increases transparency of government rulemaking decisions, and it establishes a mechanism for the public to hold agencies accountable.

We have to do everything possible so that the American people trust that those of us that are in the people's House are actually here for them because the reality is that they don't.

They do see us as people who are here to enrich ourselves, people who are here to hear ourselves speak. Working families demand accountability, and they have given us a mandate. They are asking us for bold solutions to economic justice, and it means taking on corporate greed.

As we get closer to an administration that has promised to weaken the pillars of our democracy more than ever, I think it is going to be critical that Progressives and every Democrat, frankly, every elected official that is here for working families, get together to unite and address corporate greed. If we don't, we will continue to see what we see now, which is corporations becoming wealthier than wealthy can possibly be, while poor people continue to have to choose between healthcare and feeding their children.

I thank Congressman DELUZIO for the opportunity to speak today. I thank him for bringing up such an important, critical issue. I look forward to working with him in the next Congress.

Mr. DELUZIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for her powerful words.

This democracy is not for sale. That should not be something that is controversial in this Chamber or anything else. Our constituents expect us to fight for all of them.

One of the places that we have seen this consolidation, this concentration, this raw power really hurt folks is in agriculture. We see it because we know that food production is a key step in that grocery supply chain, and we know we hear from our constituents that the cost of groceries is too high. We are all paying too much for food because of this consolidation that we see in agriculture. Folks are getting ripped off. They are tired of it.

This increased consolidation also puts the squeeze on smaller, local farms, family farms, small businesses, people often deeply rooted in their communities, in my community, the communities of so many of the Members of this Chamber.

This summer I visited a farm in my district and met with farmers from the

Beaver/Lawrence Pennsylvania Farm Bureau roundtable. Some of them are livestock producers. They sell their meat or poultry to be packed and processed. The meatpacking and processing industries are some of the most heavily consolidated in the country, and they have very little competition.

For the past decade, the four largest meatpacking and processing corporations in the United States have maintained about two-thirds of the country's market share. Some independent research has found this consolidation to be even higher with the largest four firms holding up to 85 percent of the market share in beef processing and around 60 percent in poultry. That is not very competitive. It doesn't meet the spirit of competition that we want and need for American capitalism to succeed.

I heard at that meeting in Beaver County, that compared to larger competitors, these folks had to wait longer to get their livestock in, to be taken in by these giant processing corporations. They are having a hard time negotiating fair prices and fair compensation.

We are all going to pay for the squeezing of those farmers and those small businesses. It may also be a violation of Federal law, the Packers and Stockyards Act.

After hearing from these constituents, these farmers, I wrote to the Agriculture Secretary and called for action. That high level of consolidation, once again, is driving up costs for all of us. That market power also means that processors have increased buying power that they can use to dictate prices to smaller farmers who struggle to stay afloat.

Mr. Speaker, we need a strong agriculture industry. We need family farms that make it to that next generation. We have got to promote competition for the food industry, for the farm, the grocery store, every part of that supply chain.

That also means we need antitrust enforcement with some teeth, with some muscle behind it, and with real consequences for violations. This next Congress and administration should be willing to do that work, to take on rip-off monopolies, and to create an environment that fosters competition.

That is the spirit of American capitalism that I think we all want and that our constituents expect of us. It is one where small businesses and farms can grow and thrive.

Mr. Speaker, one place we have really seen small businesses feel the squeeze are local pharmacies. If you walk across any Main Street in most of our districts, any of our districts, they are great small businesses that anchor our communities. They may be multi-generational businesses. Pharmacies are one of those places that people like; pharmacists get to know their patients. Those are relationships that are important for people's health, and they add to the vibrancy of our communities.

People suffer when they lose competition, when we lose those small businesses across our communities. I visited Towne Drugs in Aspinwall, an independent local pharmacy. I was there with other pharmacists, as well as small business owners. I heard stories about how pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, are frequently steering customers toward their own chain pharmacies. It hurts the bottom line of independent pharmacists.

Many of these PBMs are often vertically integrated, where they have a mail-order pharmacy, a retail pharmacy, and maybe an insurance business on top of that PBM or pharmacy benefits manager business. They often charge high or ridiculous fees for paperwork errors as a way to not pay those pharmacists and those pharmacies full price.

I heard about inconvenient higher prices for customers. I heard about patients being steered toward more expensive medications or specific pharmacies dealing with relationships and networks and all the rest.

In Pennsylvania this year alone, estimates are around 80 local pharmacies have closed. Those are options that are now gone. It is not just smaller, independent pharmacists. The big chains are feeling the squeeze, too. It means fewer options and worse service for patients who need a prescription, who need to get their drugs filled. It is not good for our economy.

Mr. Speaker, once again, it is that out-of-control corporate power that is making people's lives worse, hurting small businesses, hurting patients, hurting our communities and our Main Streets.

We need action on PBM reform. I am a cosponsor of several measures here including the HELP Copays Act, and the PATIENTS Act. These are just some examples of bills that I think this Chamber should pass in advance to fight back, to protect local pharmacies, to protect patients, to protect competition that we need in the healthcare economy.

We have got to keep up that fight against this out-of-control corporate power to lower healthcare costs, a place that we hear from our constituents all the time, and to protect small businesses.

Another example here where we see corporate power making life worse is not the healthcare problem. We see it in the Golden Arches, McDonald's. People don't think of McDonald's as a small business. Of course, it is a big corporation. It operates as a franchise system. Many franchise owners are small business owners.

Yet, the internet reminds us that those franchise owners for a long time did not have the ability to fix their own ice cream machines. You would see the out-of-order signs. It was impossible to get a McFlurry. The reason why is only the technicians licensed by the company that was making McDonald's soft-serve ice cream machines

were allowed to do the repairs. They limited the number of technicians so there were long waits for servicing. That is why those machines were broken. That is why you couldn't get a McFlurry. This shouldn't be that be hard.

Finally, we saw the Federal Trade Commission take action and call out the bad guy here. Now the U.S. Copyright Office has issued a new set of exceptions, allowing restaurants to repair their own copyrighted equipment used in commercial food preparation at the retail level. That means finally McDonald's soft-serve ice cream machines should be getting back online. Those repairs should be moving. We will see those McFlurries flying through again.

Again, this is that same problem, the right-to-repair policy, which is what we are talking about. A right to repair is about the freedom across industries to fix stuff and not let big companies and corporations gatekeep the information that people need to fix things.

The American people work hard. They have ingenuity. We know how to make repairs. This is about freedom in our economy. This is about making sure that small business owners, whether it is auto shops, in this case McDonald's franchise owners, can make repairs.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is fundamentally American to see that competition and to make sure that we are not seeing gatekeeping over who can fix things, whether it is a tractor or an ice cream machine.

We have also seen powerful companies use that power—not just greed—power to jam us with fees, junk fees that are often very deceptive. Hidden at the end of a transaction, you see an advertised price. All of a sudden, there are fees at the end of the transaction as you go to check out, from tickets to flights to hotels, credit card fees, food delivery apps. This has become pervasive in our economy.

I was on one of the main streets in my district, Lincoln Avenue in Bellevue, about a year or so ago, talking with small businesses about these junk fees.

I heard from the general manager of a pizza shop who told the story of how his customers in the business were suffering because of third-party delivery apps. They were seeing inconsistency between what was available on the menu and what customers were seeing. They were seeing big fees taken out of their orders. Customers were mad because service was getting worse. It wasn't working out for his business.

In fact, I went next door to the ice cream shop. I told them what I was there to work on at the pizza shop. They told me the same story. These apps were hurting their small business, as well.

□ 1845

In fact, that pizza shop had to re-name. They hired their own delivery

driver to bring it in, which was an expense, but it made their business better.

It tells you how impactful and bad those hidden fees are on a small business owner like a restaurant, like a pizza shop, that they were willing to defend their reputation, defend their business, make an investment, hire in-house, and change the name. Ultimately, it was worth doing that because of these predatory junk fees that we see from middlemen.

It is unfortunately, though, the newest version of a story we have seen for far too long: a big corporation hurting a small business, and third-party middlemen using these hidden fees to deceive customers into paying more. Again, it might be tickets, a flight, or a hotel. Those junk fees often have very little connection to the service or the product being provided.

I think they are a lose-lose for our local economy and working families, but those junk fees might be a great profit source for a third-party middleman or a powerful corporation.

I will give an example, and most sports fans will be familiar with it, Mr. Speaker. This past summer, I used StubHub to buy tickets to a Pittsburgh Pirates game. It was actually Paul Skenes' debut. I was pretty excited to see him show up for the Buccos. I took my family. We got jammed and slammed with junk fees, like everyone else who buys tickets these days.

The fees were more than a quarter of the overall ticket price. Those fees are often hidden until the very end of the transaction. It is not the advertised price.

Companies like Ticketmaster, which is owned by Live Nation, control the market from tickets to venues to music promotion. Live Nation directly manages more than 400 artists and controls about 60 percent or so of promotions of major concert venues across America. They control more than 265 concert venues in North America alone.

Through Ticketmaster, Live Nation controls about 80 percent or more of major concert venues' primary ticketing for concerts. That is not competitive. It is not a competitive market, Mr. Speaker.

What are they doing with that power? They are driving up prices with things like junk fees. They are making activities like concerts and going to a game out of reach for too many families. These are important events, games, competitions.

I mean, my goodness, I am from western Pennsylvania. A Steelers game, a Pens game, or a Pirates game is a big deal for people. We love our teams. I know I am not alone in that in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Fans are all paying for this.

When these powerful companies cut exclusive deals that hurt venues, that restrict other venues, that rip off performers, it hurts a lot of people and hurts the fans. This behavior seems to

be more than just a rip-off. It is probably also illegal.

The Justice Department has filed suit to split up Ticketmaster from Live Nation. That case remains pending in the courts.

Folks are tired of getting ripped off. They are tired of congressional inaction here. They expect us to take on this corporate power.

We know that when massive corporations are allowed to take on small businesses and deceive their customers, we all pay for it. Western Pennsylvania certainly knows that story. We are not alone in that.

As I heard that day in Bellevue and across my district, small businesses are strong. They are resilient. They are flexible. They adapt. They need our help here in the Congress. It is about their workers, and it is about our communities. I know that we can step up to it. We have to do more.

According to a 2019 study, 85 percent of Americans experience a hidden or junk fee for service. That was in 2019. That was before the COVID pandemic, where we saw much more reliance on, say, food delivery. I know we have to do more.

I will quote the general manager from that pizza shop that day who told me: "These fees may seem small, but they really add up."

That is what it is all about, Mr. Speaker, those fees hurting folks, hurting small businesses that we have to stand up for, that we have to fight back on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also talk about our national security, which is maybe not a place we think that consolidation affects us, but it does.

I have the great privilege, Mr. Speaker, to serve on the Armed Services Committee. I wore the uniform earlier in my life, before I came to this Chamber. I will tell you, we have challenges with the defense industrial base. We need it to be strong and resilient to meet the challenges not just of today but of tomorrow.

When it comes to our defense industrial base, the suppliers, the manufacturers that make stuff here, we need to have them do better. We need to better protect public money and make sure our Department of Defense is ready and equipped to answer whatever our country might require of our servicemembers. We have seen the same trends across our economy in our defense industrial base.

In 1990, there were more than 50, 51, prime contractors in our defense industrial base. That number now is down to five. That is heavy consolidation. You see it right here, 51 to 5. These are the companies that make ships, missiles, rockets, you name it, all the things that we need that are central to our national security and our defense. We have gone from 51 to 5.

This reduction is depriving the American people of competition for key elements of our defense. I hear it from military leaders in the committee. I



have seen it in reports that the Pentagon has penned that too often the current defense contractors are delivering not on time. They are behind schedule, and the costs are too high. The quality isn't what it should be, what the American people expect.

We have to fight back against this consolidation, Mr. Speaker. I think we need more competition in our defense industrial base. It is ripping off our military, which means ripping off the American people. There is public money we have to protect.

I think there is support building in this Chamber on both sides of the aisle to strengthen competition here to make sure our defense industrial base is stronger and to protect public money.

I have taken action along with colleagues. This year's National Defense Authorization Act, the defense bill, included my Best Price for Our Military Act. That is an important measure. It is a bipartisan bill. It closes a timing loophole that defense contractors are using to delay providing critical certified cost and pricing data to the Pentagon.

My bill now requires these contractors provide this data before contract agreement so that we can see whether we are getting the best deal or whether we have to go back to the negotiating table. It lets officers do a more informed analysis and be better stewards of public money.

I hope to see this included in the final version of the defense bill that we will pass and send to the President.

I know defense contractors and others lobbied to increase the threshold point where they are required to report their pricing data to the Department of Defense under the Truth in Negotiations Act. In 2018, this threshold jumped from \$750,000 up to \$2 million. That meant, below that threshold, they didn't have to provide that data. That is less oversight. I think we need more.

The goal of our Defense Department is to provide security, defense for all of us, for the national interest of the United States. It never should have and doesn't have the goal to enrich giant defense corporations that produce products that are too often behind schedule, overpriced, and don't meet the quality that we expect, that we in the Congress require.

We need to ensure that our sailors, soldiers, airmen, marines, and guardians are equipped with the very best. That is patriotic, that we protect public money.

Strengthening oversight enforcement within DOD, taking on price gouging, working with the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice Antitrust Division, all of that is about fostering more competition that we need in our defense industrial base.

Corporate power doesn't just hurt competition in defense. It doesn't just lead to higher costs. It does those things, but it puts our safety at risk. We saw it with the impact to families

who were worried about finding baby formula, infant formula. We see it in sectors of the economy all over the country that when corporate power grows too strong, it can put us at risk. It can treat us and our communities like collateral damage in the way of their profits.

We saw that on February 3, 2023, a Norfolk Southern train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, across the border from my district and my constituents in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. We saw it on the news, a flaming pile of train cars, a horrible derailment caused by incompetence and greed at that railroad.

We saw brave first responders rush in to help. That is what people do, they rush in to help and serve others. They didn't know what chemicals they were dealing with, which is its own problem. The local communities felt like they were left out of the loop. They didn't know what was happening.

Then, we saw a decision to do a controlled release, sending a toxic fireball into the sky that we now know was chemicals, including vinyl chloride. That was later deemed to be unnecessary.

The findings of the National Transportation Safety Board, the NTSB, included concerns that Norfolk Southern and its contractors intentionally misled the on-site incident commander and local and State officials, pressuring them to order the vent and burn that sent that fireball flying into the sky. They were toxic chemicals. That is corporate power run amok. It hurt my constituents, and it hurt our neighbors in Ohio.

It seemed to me that railroad and its contractors pushed that vent and burn because they cared more about their profit than our safety. They cared about getting rail operations moving more than they cared about making sure we were safe. That is unacceptable.

It is not just my community in western Pennsylvania and our neighbors in Ohio. We know there are tracks across this country. Communities like mine live near and along the tracks. This happens again, and it happens a lot in this country, unfortunately. We have to make rail safer. We have to bring down the rates of derailments and require more of these railroads.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO), one of my colleagues who I know is a strong supporter of rail safety. He is with us to make sure that we protect communities like ours.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Representative DELUZIO lending his voice on the House floor to speak to some of the injustice out there. Certainly, representing a district that has immense amounts of rail, it is important for us to address safety, consumer ridership, and also the economy.

Over these past months and years, we have seen far too many hardworking Americans struggling to get by and crippled by costs.

Recent data shows that more than one-quarter of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck. We need to be sensitive to all of these perspectives as they relate to working families.

Meanwhile, corporate greed and wealth disparity are at an all-time high. One of the countless recent examples of billion-dollar corporations putting profits over people's lives came during and after Hurricanes Helene and Milton made landfall, wreaking death and destruction across the southeastern United States. In their wake, complaints of price gouging poured in as families trying to flee the devastating storms reported skyrocketing costs for airline tickets, gas, hotel rooms, and more.

Despite many States having anti-price-gouging laws—these vary from State to State—the largest corporations can often easily avoid liability. That is why, last month, I joined a dozen of my Democratic colleagues in a letter led by Senator ELIZABETH WARREN calling for a Federal anti-price-gouging law to protect American consumers.

Unchecked corporate greed has hurt everyday Americans for far too long. Democrats are ready to face this issue head-on. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem that President-elect Trump and Republicans share the same commitment. Rather than working with us to drive down the cost of living and make big corporations pay their fair share, they have announced their plans to expand the Trump tax scam.

Expanding this unpopular law will only further cement massive tax breaks for Trump's billionaire buddies like Elon Musk while sticking the working-class people who voted for him with higher costs on everyday goods through his half-baked tariff scheme.

Experts from both sides of the aisle have said plainly that if these GOP policies are implemented, they will send prices surging and claw back any progress we have made to stem inflation. These are not the types of policies that the American people signed up for.

Republicans and Democrats alike need to stand together to enact a bipartisan tax plan that would lower taxes for working- and middle-class families while ensuring everyone pays their fair share, including Trump's billionaire buddies.

If they aren't willing to join us in this effort to support middle-class Americans, we will fight back however we can, and that is a promise. Of course, it involves all sorts of angles that speak to the doability for working families, making certain that regulations speak to the needs of consumers for rail safety, growing the economy, and providing efficiencies so that American families are justly served.

We need to do a lot of business in the upcoming session, and we need to do it with American families in mind, those working families who struggle in the economy. We need to make improvements and let fairness be our guide.

I thank Congressman DELUZIO for his leadership on behalf of working families and on behalf of safety. I know we both have districts that require that sort of laser-sharp focus. It is an honor to serve with him. I thank him for raising his voice and boldly speaking for justice for our American consumers.

□ 1900

Mr. DELUZIO. I thank the gentleman from New York for his strong words and his commitment to his constituents, to safety, for hardworking people having a shot at the American Dream, which fundamentally is what I think we all want here.

We heard from Members representing districts across the country, a broad ideological spectrum of folks tonight, all talking about ways that corporate power has hurt their communities or hurt their constituents—it has hurt competition—and expressing their willingness, our shared willingness, to fight, to fight back for our constituents.

I represent a competitive district. I will say, Mr. Speaker, I have the best district in the country. I might get some argument from my colleagues about that. This is a place, like so many others, where folks want the American Dream to be strong. I think every Member here would say the same of their constituents.

If you work hard, you play by the rules, the American Dream is within your reach. That is what we are trying to do. I have been laser focused, as have so many of our colleagues here, about lowering costs, taking on corporate power to protect small businesses and workers, fighting against lousy trade deals that hurt places like western Pennsylvania, making stuff more in this country, more manufacturing, cracking down on junk fees, on price-gouging. That is really hurting folks and really hurting our Main Streets.

These economic priorities, they are good policies, and it is popular because the American people want us to fight for them. They don't want to get ripped off. They want to see real American capitalism that is marked by competition.

The survey data here is clear. This is a poll from ABC News and The Washington Post from July, 85 percent of Americans say higher costs are a very important issue, one of the single most important issues they feel that we should confront.

There is a tendency by some in politics to try and please everybody. Okay. You know, I am a little sick and tired though of folks around here, whether they are in this Chamber or out in the think-tanks looking for a win-win in every situation.

You know what? Sometimes, there isn't.

Sometimes there is a toxic fireball shot up into the sky near your community when there are small pharmacies getting killed, when there are junk fees

hurting your constituents. Sometimes there is a bad guy, and you have got to fight them.

The American people want us to fight for them. I am proud to see so many of my colleagues join me in that fight. The goal here is simple, and it is popular. Make life better. Make it less of a rip-off. Take on the corporate power that has been hurting so many of us.

I think that is the path back to the American Dream, along with strengthening and revitalizing our American manufacturing. Sometimes you call it the villain. I know we need more competition across our economy. We need to be unafraid of the fight, and we have to do it.

We are ready to go to the mat for the American people, for our constituents, to strengthen the American Dream. That is the vision. That is my vision. I know I am not alone in that. It is one that I know will resonate in the Rust Belt, the Sun Belt, the Coast, all over this country.

I thank my colleagues, my caucus members who joined me, I appreciate your leadership.

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

#### RECOGNIZING PATRICIA BRADSHAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 30 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Patricia Bradshaw for her upcoming and well-deserved retirement after her distinguished career with the Central Intelligence Agency.

Patricia began her career with the Central Intelligence Agency in 1984 as a records clerk, where it quickly became apparent that she would have an excellent career with the Agency.

Working up the ranks within the Office of Security from her time as a security clearance investigator and adjudicator, to serving the Agency overseas in physical and technical security, she eventually reached the pinnacle of the Agency as the Director of the Office of Security.

Over the course of her career, Patricia exemplified the epitome of the American Dream, even without obtaining a college degree. Her story is undeniable proof that with hard work and dedication to your craft, the limits of your achievements are boundless.

All Americans should be immensely grateful to Patricia Bradshaw for her unwavering service and dedication to our Nation.

I thank Patricia for her patriotism. On behalf of a grateful Nation, we hope she enjoys her well-earned retirement.

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

#### HONORING DAVID HOBSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER) for 30 minutes.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TURNER. 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 subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable man. Dave Hobson was a beloved friend and leader. His life was marked by service, commitment, and an unyielding dedication to his country.

I saw firsthand how much Dave loved Ohio and the Miami Valley during our time together in the House of Representatives. Whether he was advocating for veterans or working to strengthen our national defense, Dave's efforts were always driven by a love for his country and a commitment to improve the lives of others.

The impact of Dave's legacy is felt across Ohio's 10th Congressional District, particularly at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base where the street Hobson Way is named in his honor and at Clark State College, which named its Beaver Creek Center, Dave Hobson Hall.

Dave believed that public office was a sacred trust, and he upheld that trust with every action he took. Beyond his remarkable political career, Dave was a devoted family man, a mentor, and a friend.

Dave was grateful, and we are grateful for his life, the life he lived, and the legacy that he left behind. He will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I now recognize my friend and colleague, the dean of the Ohio delegation, Ms. KAPTUR.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a very grateful, but heavy heart, along with all of our Ohio colleagues and those beyond Ohio as we honor the life and memory of our distinguished and affable former Ohio colleague, Congressman David Hobson.

Dave passed away on the 6th of October, 2024, having served in our people's House from 1991 to 2009, but he first sharpened his spurs in the Ohio Senate serving from 1982 to 1991. Dave was a true patriot, and a fine public servant first.

His lifetime of service to the people of greater Springfield and Ohio was marked by results and perseverance. Dave was a practical and visionary leader dedicated to accomplishing tangible results throughout his decades of generous public service. To his colleagues, he was a personal friend whose impact will be felt for generations.

Dave embodied a joy of life and devoted his life to his family and serving America. His 18-year tenure in Congress was marked by his enthusiasm, remarkable perseverance, and relentless commitment to achieve results, including moving the needle forward for