

his life to serving our State with integrity, passion, and a commitment to justice. From his role as assistant district attorney of Jefferson Parish, to serving as judge of division O of the 24th Judicial District Court and chief judge of the Fifth District Circuit Court of Appeals, he has worked tirelessly to uphold the principles of fairness and equity for the people of Louisiana.

Marion's service for our State extends to every part of our community. He was on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including the board of the Boys & Girls Club, The Salvation Army, Grace House of Louisiana, Responsibility House, G-REDI, and the Jefferson Parish Community Foundation.

He has also supported those suffering with substance abuse in our State, founding one of the first treatment-based district courts in Louisiana and receiving awards, including the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Pioneer and Recovery Award of the Office of Addictive Disorders Professional Services Award. The compassion he has shown to his neighbors in their most difficult moments is a testament to his character and serves as a shining example for all of us to follow.

Through his leadership, compassion, and vision, Councilman Marion Edwards has left a lasting mark on Jefferson Parish and our great State. His contributions will resonate for generations to come.

As Marion enters this new chapter of his life, he should know that his legacy of service, leadership, and love for community will continue to inspire all of us for many, many years to come.

My dear friend is, in fact, a gentleman, a scholar, and a statesman. I congratulate Marion on an extraordinary career and thank him for his unwavering dedication to the people of Louisiana and to our country. I also thank him for allowing me to call him my friend.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF KIRK SCHURING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. SYKES) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and mourn the loss of Ohio State Senator Kirk Schuring, a true advocate and champion for the people of Stark County, Ohio.

Senator Schuring was a dedicated public servant who took great pride in serving Stark County for over three decades in the Ohio General Assembly as both a member of the house of representatives and the senate.

Senator Schuring held multiple leadership positions during his time in the general assembly, including as senate president speaker pro tempore, and acting as speaker of the house.

Among his advocacy was his tireless work to provide the freedom for com-

munities to create their own joint economic development districts and the creation of the Akron-Canton Metroplex to generate additional job opportunities and economic growth in the region.

I had the honor of working alongside Senator Schuring in the Ohio House of Representatives, where I witnessed firsthand his commitment to the people of northeast Ohio. Serving with Senator Schuring was a pleasure, and he was known as a reliable leader who found a way to work across the aisle and in support of his constituents every day.

As a first-term legislator, Kirk took me under his wing, a Democrat, because he was so deeply concerned about the work and did not allow partisan politics to get in the way of protecting our communities.

Notably, Senator Schuring was monumental in helping me pass House Bill 1, a bill to protect victims of dating violence. Surely, without his leadership, this bill would not have become law.

Without a doubt, Senator Schuring left a mark on Stark County and the State of Ohio. For his outstanding devotion to our community, he earned the respect and esteem of many. In the wake of his passing, his numerous contributions will not be forgotten.

Though his presence will be truly missed, his memory will live on through those he advocated for and his family, including his wife, Darlene; their son, J. Derrick; daughter-in-law, Allison; daughter, Kristen; and their six grandchildren, Preston, Parker, Quinn, Owen, Everett, and Lucy, whom he loved deeply. Thus, with deepest sympathy, I pay tribute to a truly phenomenal individual, Senator Kirk Schuring.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR VERNON SYKES ON HIS RETIREMENT

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of a truly dedicated and true public servant, Ohio State Senator Vernon Sykes, the ultimate statesman, who is retiring from the Ohio General Assembly.

As the Member of Congress representing Ohio's 13th Congressional District, but most importantly as his daughter, it is my privilege to congratulate Senator Sykes on a distinguished career and extend my sincere gratitude for all that he has done for the people of Akron and the State of Ohio for his nearly 50 years in public service.

Senator Sykes' career as a legislator began in 1980 when he was appointed as the Ward 3 Councilmember in the city of Akron. In 1983, he was then appointed to the Ohio State House, becoming the first Black person to represent Summit County in the Ohio General Assembly. He would eventually serve as the chair of the Ohio House Finance & Appropriations Committee, in the Ohio State Senate as the co-chair of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, and as a professor emeritus of political science and former director of

the Columbus Program in State Issues at Kent State University.

Go Flashes.

In the legislature, he became a champion for early education, criminal justice reform, economic development, and so much more. Notably, Senator Sykes passed the toughest fair housing law in the country, the State of Ohio's first legislation to compensate the wrongfully imprisoned, and was the lead sponsor of two constitutional amendments to end the scourge of gerrymandering in Ohio that were approved by over 70 percent of the voters.

During his time in public office, Senator Sykes championed the people of our community, and he is the example of true selfless public service. He has always put the people of our community first, and his deep desire to serve his community is an inspiration to all who have had the opportunity to experience his passion for people and for public service.

For his advocacy, Senator Sykes has earned numerous awards and accolades, including the Public Elected Official of the Year Award; the Champion for Working Families from Ohio AFL-CIO; alumni awards from his alma maters, the University of Akron, as well as Ohio University.

My father is one of the main reasons I am standing here on the House floor today. He and my mother, who is also a public servant, taught me the value of hard work from a young age and equipped me with constant support and encouragement.

Mr. Speaker, today Senator Sykes is giving his farewell speech in the Ohio Senate, and I can't be there because of scheduled votes today, so I am doing the next best thing and giving him his flowers on the floor of the United States House of Representatives as a symbol of his legacy to the city of Akron, Summit and Portage Counties, the State of Ohio, the United States of America, and the entire global community.

It is not often elected leaders can brag about such impactful and prominent careers. Senator Sykes can, but he won't because he is simply too humble to do so. Thus, I am doing it for him.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Ohio's 13th Congressional District, I congratulate and thank Senator Vernon Sykes, my dad, on a storied career as a legislator at the State and local level and for over 40 years of outstanding service and devotion to our community.

FLORIDA BOOK BANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. MAGAZINER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MAGAZINER. Mr. Speaker, Kurt Vonnegut, Toni Morrison, and Stephen King are just a few of the authors whose books have been banned from Florida public school libraries because of the censorship laws passed by extreme Republican politicians.

President Eisenhower once warned: "Don't join the book burners." "Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book."

According to the Florida Department of Education, more than 700 books were banned from libraries in public school districts last year after Governor Ron DeSantis signed Florida's extreme book ban law.

□ 1100

There is nothing Americans hate more than politicians who want to take away their freedoms.

Yet Republican politicians want to take away the freedom of women to get an abortion. They want to take away the freedom of gay and lesbian Americans to marry their partners. Now, they want to take away freedom at the library.

Banning books is not just an attack on personal freedom. It is an attack on American values that we all believe in. People of all ages ought to be able to access the world of knowledge that comes from reading, including from those books that some may find controversial. Reading controversial books is part of how we challenge ourselves and each other to grow and strive and to create.

Book banners will claim that their goal is to protect people, but what they really want is to control people. That is not America.

"Having the freedom to read and the freedom to choose [what to read] is one of the best gifts my parents ever gave me," said children's author Judy Blume, another author whose name appears on the book ban list.

We must reclaim the freedom to read from the extreme politicians trying to turn back the clock for our kids, our country, and our future.

50 YEARS OF PROGRESS CANNOT ERASE 250 YEARS OF SUFFERING

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

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, in February 1967, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote his famous book, "Where Do We Go From Here."

In that book, he pondered upon the question of whether or not America was prepared to choose community over chaos; whether this Nation, so long protected by the crosswinds of two oceans, was finally prepared to rid itself of the impediments of bitterness and hatred; or whether the malignant sicknesses of racism and sexism were so intrinsic and interwoven into the American fabric that we would never be able to rid ourselves of it.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I submit to all of my colleagues that this question is still before us. That is to say, some 60 years later, we are still trying to decide who we are as a country.

Sixty years after the historic Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, we are still trying to figure out if everyone

still should have a vote that counts. We are still trying to determine if we will choose progress over regression, tomorrow over yesterday, truth over falsehood. In spite of the gains of the civil rights movement, the answer to these questions remains profoundly unclear.

In the words of Charles Dickens, we are living in the best of times and the worst of times, the age of wisdom and the age of foolishness.

After the last Presidential election in November, there are millions of Americans wondering if this country will ever come to know the things that make for peace.

I rise today because I fear that this Nation is on the precipice of the greatest rollback of civil rights since the end of Reconstruction in 1890.

I rise today because there are too many of my colleagues, in addition to too many people in America, who have no problem with rolling back the rights of the weakest and most vulnerable among us.

Given the long and meandering history of this Republic, there ought to be unanimous consent when it comes to ensuring that the people who have been systematically excluded from the American Dream are continually included in the future of American progress and prosperity. Sadly, that is not the case.

Whole segments of this society have arbitrarily decided that they have the omnipotent right to determine when there are too many Black people in boardrooms, as we saw on June 29, 2023, with the elimination of the affirmative action programs.

As a consequence, there are fewer African Americans in dental school. There are fewer African Americans in law school. There are fewer African Americans attending some of the most prestigious universities.

Some people have arbitrarily determined that African Americans enrolled in these selective universities is too much, as determined by the actions of the Students for Fair Admissions authored by Mr. Blum, or too many Black businesses finally being included in the procurement of government contracts and management opportunities is too much.

It pains me to have to remind the leaders of this country that a nation suffering from the sickness of racism for 250 years cannot stop taking its medicine. It needs to make sure that the cancer does not return.

Fifty years of progress cannot erase 250 years of suffering, and the suffering of which I speak is not limited to the African-American community but rather is located in the very soul of America. I am talking about those that are without jobs in Appalachia. I am talking about the life expectancy of Caucasian women in rural America.

We need to enforce and strengthen civil rights. Civilian rights are key to the growth of America, but let us never forget that hatred destroys the host

more than it devastates the object of its belligerent contempt.

I say to all of my colleagues today: America needs diversity, equity, and inclusion more than Black people do. I say that because, even if the prognosticators are right that the last election was about economics, then that simply means that millions of people in this country were willing to sublimate the moral authority of their conscience because of the price of chicken.

Mr. Speaker, that is just as terrifying a reality as is the prospect of racism and sexism being the driving cause.

I think sometimes we forget that the policies we enshrine have real effects on the lives of people. I know in my district, the First Congressional District of Illinois, the incoming administration's promised attack on affirmative action, diversity, equity, and inclusion will mean that thousands of people on the south side of Chicago, the inner cities of America, and the suburban and rural parts of our country will not be able to provide for their families.

It won't matter to them what the price of chicken is because, no matter the price, everything is too expensive when your income disappears and your income is stagnant.

In spite of the differences between the two parties, let us never forget that there are still millions of people in this country who cannot afford to pay their rent, who cannot afford hospitalization, who cannot afford to pay their mortgages, who find rents out of control, whose wages have not changed, and who are struggling to give their children a better life, a better country, and a better future. By better, I mean a more ethical society in which to grow old.

Mr. Speaker, let us do whatever we must to build up what others are determined to tear down. Let us do whatever we can to hold up the light. Let us keep the dream alive.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 6 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

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

PRAYER

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

Gracious and generous God, prepare our hearts and minds to receive all that You provide, both seen and unseen, in the days that lay ahead of us.