

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.

You have opened wide doors of opportunities for us to make a difference in this place, our communities, and our world. May we walk through those doors with confidence and with firm conviction, and may we glorify You in our work today.

When those moments prove challenging, when adversaries attempt to thwart our efforts to serve as vessels for the goodness, hope, love, and peace You have poured into us, may we stand firm in our faith. May our lives in the face of all trials serve as a testament to Your mercy and grace.

We entrust this day our deliberations and our discussions into Your care, sure of Your steadfast love and emboldened by Your abiding presence.

In Your sovereign name we pray.
Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. HINSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. HINSON led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING SHERIFF JOE CHAPMAN UPON HIS RETIREMENT

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

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to recognize and honor the retirement of Walton County Sheriff Joe Chapman.

Starting out as a beat cop, spending every day on the front lines keeping our community safe, to serving as Walton County sheriff, Joe Chapman has dedicated the last 40 years of his life to bringing no excuses, commonsense law enforcement to Walton County.

There is a sign above Sheriff Chapman's door that reads, "I hate excuses," and that is exactly how he operates. He is a true servant leader, a pillar to the community, and a mentor to the next generation of Georgia law enforcement.

In addition to being one of the most respected and admired lawmen in Georgia, Sheriff Chapman is a Marine Corps and Georgia Army National Guard veteran and a commissioner for the Sheriff's Retirement Fund of Georgia.

Sheriff Chapman's legacy and impact on Walton County will not be soon forgotten. I want to express my gratitude to Sheriff Chapman for his selfless work over these last 20 years. On behalf of Georgia's 10th Congressional District, I thank him for his service. I wish him a happy, healthy, and safe retirement. He has certainly earned it.

END HUNGER NOW

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of Food Service Director Kirsten Nelson, the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District is proving that school meals can be local, nutritious, and delicious.

Last month, I joined school leaders, State and local officials, and food hub staff at Acton-Boxborough High School in my home State of Massachusetts to learn more about the nutritious meals being prepared for students using local produce.

With the support of Federal funding through the Farm to School Program, the district is utilizing nearby food hubs to purchase fruits and vegetables from local farmers. Our State's universal meal program has been key to improving school meal offerings and expanding access to local produce for all students.

I tried the curry cauliflower, and it was delicious. I talked with some of the students, who told me they have taught their parents recipes from school lunches.

This partnership should serve as inspiration for all of us to continue our work to improve school food, strengthen food systems, and end hunger now.

RECOGNIZING ERNEST TOPNESS

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

Mrs. HINSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Ernest Topness for his distinguished and impactful career serving both our Nation and the people of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Mr. Topness, known by many as Ernie, first joined the United States Postal Service in 1959 after serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean war.

Ernie delivered mail in Cedar Rapids for 65 years, making connections and building friendships with those on his route.

Ernie's dedication is unmatched. When others would sit out on a snow day or call in sick, he was always known to actually show up.

At the age of 91, Ernie recently retired as the second longest serving mail carrier in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Topness' legacy is one of unwavering dedication and inspiring service. We wish him all the best in his well-deserved retirement.

CELEBRATING PETER J. WESTBROOK

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

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life and legacy of a trailblazing Olympic fencer, Peter J. Westbrook, who unfortunately passed away this weekend.

To keep her son off the tumultuous streets of 1967 Newark, Peter Westbrook's mother, Mariko, enrolled him in fencing class, where his natural talents were fully realized.

In 1984, he became the first Black American to win an Olympic bronze medal in fencing. Throughout his career, he won countless competitions and is recognized by many athletic halls of fame.

One of his greatest achievements, Mr. Speaker, was the opening of the Peter Westbrook Foundation, which allowed him to introduce Black and Latino youth to the fencing world, including my own family, which was touched by him. The foundation provides fencing lessons, academic assistance, and opportunities for marginalized youth.

The foundation has produced seven Olympians. Just this year, Lauren Scruggs, a foundation alum, made history by becoming the first Black woman to win a gold medal in the Olympics in fencing.

Peter Westbrook left an incredible legacy in the fencing world. He was an icon and trailblazer and changed the lives of countless youth. He will always be remembered in my household, New York City, and the country.

REMEMBERING STANLEY KLEIN

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

Mr. MILLER of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Stanley Klein, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and entrepreneur. Stanley leaves behind a legacy of love, integrity, and innovation.

Born on July 20, 1942, Stanley graduated from Allderice High School in 1960 and joined the Army. After the Army, Stanley attended Youngstown State College in Ohio and thereafter met his late first wife, Terry.

Stanley and his father-in-law, Irving Stern, went into business together and founded Multi-Flow Dispensers of Ohio. Stanley grew Multi-Flow into the dominant soft drink and beverage dispensing business for bars, restaurants, and taverns throughout north and central Ohio.

Stanley was married to his wife, Laura, for more than 44 years. He cherished every moment spent with his