

Do this thought experiment with me. If I came to you and said: There is going to be what we'll call a vaccine—it is technically not a vaccine—a vaccine for fentanyl that actually does a protein attachment, meaning it can't break the brain-blood barrier, and it lasts 6 months to 1 year.

With just that, we think we gain over \$11 billion, and we haven't even worked in the cost estimates of what happens when you have 390,000 of your brothers and sisters dead over 6 years.

Start to think like a revolutionary. Instead of dumping more money into rehab, why don't we do the rehab and say: There is a chance here we can make it so the person addicted to fentanyl or the law enforcement or firefighter doesn't die from the exposure to it. Guess what. The idea is great economics.

This is an example of thinking differently.

What happens instead of spending the money to maintain people's misery? Money could be spent to end the misery.

We have done a number of different bills, from diabetes to other things, saying we need to help our brothers and sisters have affordable insulin. Wouldn't it be more moral if we could actually take on that 33 percent of U.S. healthcare spending that is just diabetes and dramatically reduce the number of our brothers and sisters who have the disease? That is moral. The other is just maintenance of misery.

Let's just run through a couple of other ones that we have been trying to model, such as the Medicare Transaction Fraud Prevention Act. It turns out there is a couple of great articles out there. If you dive into them, what is the most powerful thing that can be done to deal with Medicare fraud?

It is not a bunch of lawyers. It is not a bunch of investigators. It is a data scientist. The problem is data scientists are really expensive right now, and CMS is having trouble working out their pay schedule to hire them. This is the person who sits down and builds the model and says: Okay, this doesn't make sense. Go look at that. This doesn't make sense.

We believe there is \$60 billion annually—not over 10 years—every single year in Medicare fraud, and you can find it using data scientists.

Remember how I was telling you before how we need to find \$4 trillion or so to cover an extension of the tax cut? That is \$400 billion a year. This is \$60 billion from doing the right thing.

There are ideas here.

There is the use of technology that, hey, here is my doctors' notes and here is my insurance contract. Do you have a bunch of billers fight with each other over months and months and months trying to collect between the insurance company and the insurance company is saying you didn't document things right? Well, there is this concept of clean claims, where the AI says: Here is the doctors' notes. It matches the contract. Automatically pay it.

We think that saves \$31 billion every year. Well, heaven, I am getting close to \$100 billion just on those two things using technology.

We have already dropped a piece of legislation—this one is over 10 years—that just cleans up some of the fraud and sets some timelines on the employee retention tax credit. Well, that is almost \$80 billion.

These are just a handful of ideas that we have actually had scored. How do I get the brothers and sisters around here, the Members who are elected, their staff, the press, the public to see there are solutions where you don't have to keep piling onto debt, but it is a revolutionary use of technology to make government better, faster, and cheaper.

There is hope. There really is hope. Why the hell is this place so terrified of doing anything different? So many of the solutions you hear around here sound like it is the 1990s. We are all walking around with a supercomputer in the palm of our hand. Use that technology to make this another American century.

Mr. Speaker, I am losing my voice, and I think I actually made the point. Thank you for tolerating my diatribe, and I also know the Speaker has an appointment to keep.

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

BIDDING FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

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

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, over most of the past decade, each time I boarded a plane to head to D.C., I would write a note to my kids, Sophie and Aven, to explain to them why I was leaving and what I would be working on while I was gone.

My kids were three and six when I started here, and when they were little, my letters were elementary: "This week, I will be working for more jobs in our region."

My letters always ended with: "Be good. I love you."

Later, as they became older, my notes to them became more complicated, covering all sorts of things, from Russia's invasion to Ukraine, to immigration reform, to the intricacies of the congressional appropriations process. Even as they became more complicated, a common thread in each of those letters was this: I tried to communicate to them that I was trying to work every day to make things better for their generation and for their country.

Mr. Speaker, today, as I prepared to give these final remarks on the House floor, I sent my kids this note, and with your permission, I will read it.

I wrote:

Sophie and Aven—After 20 years total in public service and the last 12 years in Con-

gress, I have had a lot of people ask me what I have learned.

Honestly, I have learned a lot.

I have learned that my left knee handles the aisle seat way better than the middle or the window.

I have learned where the best cups of coffee, the best tacos, the best burgers, and the best bathrooms are in Washington's Sixth Congressional District.

I have learned more lyrics to more songs driving around our district than anyone could imagine and certainly more than my staff cared to hear me sing.

But I have also learned some valuable lessons, and today, kids, I want to share with you some of the things I have learned.

I have learned the importance of knowing your why.

As you guys know, I grew up in the district that I represent, in Port Angeles.

When I was in high school, it was right around the time the timber industry took it on the chin, and a lot of my friends' parents lost their jobs, and a lot of my neighbors lost their jobs. It had a big impact on me.

So I went off to college, and my senior thesis was focused on how to help timber towns in Washington State. When I went to grad school, my doctoral dissertation focused on challenges facing single-industry communities. I looked at mining towns in the U.K. and timber towns in Washington, trying to figure out what to do when the main industry that is the reason for a community's existence declines.

While I was always interested in our democracy, I didn't know I was going to run for office. I was working in economic development, and, honestly, I just got grumpy. I found myself saying: Our ability to grow jobs in this region is surely impacted by what government does and doesn't do.

Finally, some of my friends said: Well, you seem like you have a lot of good ideas, and you sure complain a lot. Why don't you go do something about it?

The next thing I knew, I was serving in the State legislature.

Then, about 12½ years ago, my predecessor, Norm Dicks, who has been and continues to be an extraordinary friend and mentor to me, called me and said: In an hour, I am going to announce that I am not running again, and you should figure out whether this is something you want to do.

The chance to create more economic opportunity for more people in more places was the main reason I came here.

That is my why.

I came to Congress because I wanted to grow jobs and help the area where I grew up.

It has been the honor of my life getting to represent my hometown and our entire region. Whether it has been helping folks get access to broadband or securing funding for ports, fighting for our community hospitals, delivering funds to address flooding, securing investments to restore Puget Sound, or helping ensure that the Federal Government lives up to its trust and treaty obligations, I have been honored to work for our region. I would like to hope that the work that I have done has provided more opportunity for folks who deserve it.

Part of that effort involved taking some of the findings of my doctoral dissertation and some smart ideas from some other folks and turning them into legislation called the RE-COMPETE Act, legislation to provide flexible, multiyear support to communities that are struggling. I am really proud that we got this bill included in the CHIPS and Science Act, and I am proud that it has become the most popular program in the history of the Economic Development Administration, getting 565 applications from 49 States.

Out of the 565 applications, there were 6 that got large-scale implementation grants,

and one of the 6 was for the region where I grew up. How cool is that?

What are the takeaways?

Well, first, apparently, I am really slow. It took me more than 20 years to do something with my doctoral dissertation, but, most importantly, I never forgot my why.

Sophie and Aven—Whatever you do in your life, I hope you find your why. I hope you are able to find something that gives you as much drive as helping my hometown gave me.

Mr. Speaker, I also wrote my kids the following:

Sophie and Aven—I have also learned about the importance of being a steward. I want to encourage you to care about your country, your community, and the organizations that you are a part of.

Tearing things down is easy. Building things up is hard.

In a commencement speech delivered in 1968 at Cornell University, former Secretary John Gardner spoke about the importance of stewardship. He spoke of the importance of people being what he called loving critics of the institutions and communities in which they work, and he spoke of two concerns.

Sometimes, he said, institutions and communities suffer from what he called uncritical lovers, folks who went about their business smothering their institutions with love without thinking about how to improve them.

Functional organizations and successful communities want to get better.

Gardner also said that institutions and communities suffered from unloving critics, people who treat an institution like the pinata at the party.

I see that a lot in my job. The most popular thing a politician can do is bash Congress, and if it is done in a way that is focused on demolition rather than on improvement, that is a problem, too.

So why do I mention this? Well, John Gardner sounded that alarm 56 years ago, and the alarm is ringing louder now.

According to recent polling, faith in our institutions is at a historically low point. I am not just talking about Congress—which, according to recent polling, is less popular than head lice, colonoscopies, and the rock band Nickelback—but, according to recent polling, a majority of Americans no longer view institutions of higher education as forces for good.

Fewer and fewer Americans have faith in public schools. Less than one in five have faith in newspapers and in news media in general. Faith in business is at the lowest point it has been since Gallup began polling that question. Heck, even organized religion has taken a hit. You know you are in trouble when we are losing faith in faith.

What does it mean for us? It means all of us—we, all of us—need to be better stewards. Each of us needs to be a loving critic of our community and of the organizations and institutions about which we care.

For me, it has meant trying to make Congress better. That is why I became chair of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, which was nicknamed the fix-Congress committee. We showed that Congress can do things better when folks checked their partisan agendas at the door and just focused on working together. The Democrats and Republicans on that committee were loving critics of Congress.

We did things differently, to sit not by party, not on a dais, but around a round table, sitting next to someone from a different party. We had one staff, not separate Republican and Democratic staffs. We broke bread together and planned the work of the committee together, and it helped.

Our committee, in the midst of Presidential elections, pandemics, insurrections, and other chaos, managed to pass 202 recommendations to make Congress function better for the American people. At this point, over half of them have been implemented. Another quarter are on their way toward implementation.

Now someone can look at our record and say: Well, hey, bang-up job, pal. Clearly, Congress is fixed.

Obviously, that is not the case, although I am reminded of a conversation I had right there on the House floor with the House Chaplain during the 15th or so round of votes for Speaker of the House. I saw her here on the House floor, and I said: Pray harder.

She put her hand on my elbow, and she said: Just imagine how bad things would be in this place if I wasn't praying so hard.

So that is sort of how I look at the work of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. I think that, over time, you are going to see some positive change within this institution because of that work.

I feel lucky that I got to work with some loving critics of the institution, such as William Timmons and TOM GRAVES. I want to thank them for being collaborators, partners, and friends.

I also appreciate the efforts of STEPHANIE BICE and JOE MORELLE, who want to see the efforts to improve Congress continue.

I thank Speaker Emerita Pelosi for her vision in creating the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress and for her faith in me to serve as its chair. It has been such an honor to get to learn from her throughout my time in Congress.

I also got to work with amazing committee staff, such as Yuri Beckelman, who has an infectious enthusiasm for making the institution better; Derek Harley, who, over the last 4 years, has spent more time than anyone I know working to improve Congress; Allie Neill and Jake Olson, who built the committee from the ground up; and Marian Currinder, who brought more content knowledge on Congress than anyone.

It takes special people to try new things, and I applaud all of the committee staff for the courage and commitment to that cause.

We were also blessed to work with a cohort of nonprofits and think tanks and academics who have dedicated their time and energy to making government work better, and their work matters.

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To state the obvious, there is a lot more work to do there. We are better than our current politics. I feel so lucky to have been partners with them, and I sure hope to continue to partner with them down the road.

Sophie and Aven, I have tried to be a loving critic of this institution. I hope you will find a way to play that role in our democracy as well as steward the places and organizations that you care about.

Mr. Speaker, I wrote my kids that I have learned that we are incredibly fortunate to live in one of the most special places on the planet. A lot of the work I have done has been focused on being stewards of those places, and I feel so grateful to have had amazing partners in that work. We are blessed to have the most extraordinary national park on Earth, with places like the Hoh Rain Forest and Hurricane Ridge. We are fortunate to have folks who work for the Park Service as stewards of those treasures.

We are fortunate to have the United States Navy in our community. Our community is stronger because of the patriots who serve this Nation and call our community home. They bring their service ethic, skills, community pride, and pride as Americans to our community. We must be stewards for them and make investments in our naval shipyards to ensure that they can continue to keep our servicemembers and country safe.

We are fortunate to be home to more military veterans than nearly any other place in our country, and, again, we are stronger for that. If someone serves this country, we should have their back. I am grateful for the folks at the VA and all the veterans service organizations who do that work.

We are fortunate to have communities with local leaders, county and municipal elected officials and staff, port districts, public utility districts, chambers of commerce, economic development councils, and many others. There are too many to name, but they have been my friends and partners, and together, we have navigated a pandemic, built affordable housing, supported local businesses, and worked to make our communities safer and more vibrant. We have worked to fix flooding in Grays Harbor and to fix traffic problems in Gorst. We have stood up a forest collaborative to try to manage our forests in a way that works better.

Mr. Speaker, these partners are stewards. They are my friends, and I am grateful for them.

I wrote: Sophie and Aven, we have also worked to recover Puget Sound. We are fortunate to have this natural treasure that has supported livelihoods and lives for generations. We are fortunate to have a group of stewards that are fighting to help it.

Paramount among those stewards are our Tribal partners. We are fortunate to have 12 Native American Tribes who call Washington's Sixth Congressional District home. They are extraordinary stewards who think seven generations into the future.

I have worked with our Tribal partners on efforts to combat the climate crisis and to deal with its impacts as they try to move to higher ground, to strengthen Tribal healthcare and housing options, and on so many initiatives. The Tribal leaders in our region have been my friends and partners. They have taught me so much, and personally, I feel fortunate to consider them my friends.

Sophie and Aven, one of the lessons I have learned is that the boat moves best when everyone has their oars in the water rowing in the same direction. You get further with partners, and I am so grateful to every constituent who has been a partner in the work of our office.

Sophie and Aven, there are other things I have learned. I have learned that we have work to do to protect this amazing democratic Republic. When I say "we," I mean all of us.

President Kennedy said: "In a democracy, every citizen, regardless of his interest in politics, 'holds office'; every one of us is in a position of responsibility; and, in the final analysis, the kind of government we get depends upon how we fulfill those responsibilities."

To me, that is a reminder that we are not observers in this democracy. We are participants in it.

How is that going? An NBC News poll found that 70 percent of Americans agreed with this statement: America is so divided it is now incapable of solving big problems, and the problem is getting worse.

There was a battleground poll last year that found that, on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being no conflict and 100 being civil war, Americans put us at a 70. The median was a 70. That is the highest on record. That means, on average, Americans believe we are more than two-thirds of the way to civil war.

I visited a YMCA in our district thinking they wanted to talk to me about gymnasiums struggling from the pandemic. Instead, they wanted to talk to me about conflicts breaking out at the Y due to politics.

I don't think we just need to accept that. None of us should throw up our hands and say, well, I guess that is just life in 2024. We just won't solve any big problems and just hate each other and worry about getting punched out on the elliptical at the gym. We need to figure out how to engage folks we disagree with.

To that end, I introduced a bill called the Building Civic Bridges Act to support local efforts to bridge divides, to train AmeriCorps members in the skills related to bridge building, and to support colleges and universities that are doing work in this space. I hope Congress will eventually pass it.

We are even trying to do some of the bridge building in Congress. I am a co-chair of a group called the Bipartisan Working Group, which is about a dozen Democrats and a dozen Republicans who meet regularly over breakfast to just try to find some common ground.

I don't want to mislead you all into thinking that we are all sitting around the table and holding hands and singing "Kumbaya" or closing our eyes and doing trust falls into each other's arms. We stopped doing that after we dropped a guy. But I do find myself thinking that the work we are doing in the Bipartisan Working Group, the challenging work of trying to solve problems together, is something we need to see more of, not just in Congress, but in our country, too.

I am grateful to my colleagues who are part of that group, particularly SCOTT PETERS and my friends ANDY BARR, JACK BERGMAN, and JOHN RUTHERFORD, who have been great partners from the Republican Conference.

There are also civil society organizations, academics, and individuals trying to bring folks together to foster understanding, dialogue, and collaboration across our diverse communities to build bridges. I am really grateful to them. I am hopeful that their work will help us live up to our national motto, "E pluribus unum," "Out of many, one."

Just yesterday, former President Obama said: "If you want to create lasting change, you have to find ways to practice addition rather than subtraction."

Sophie and Aven, I hope you will do the hard work of trying to bridge divides. We all have choices about whether we exacerbate polarization or bring people together. We do better when we listen to people, when we choose to go into conversations understanding that we may be wrong and others may be right, when we respect people even when we disagree with them, when we show empathy when we are trying to bridge those divides.

Sophie and Aven, we are going to rely on your generation to help us heal.

Sophie and Aven, I have learned the value of having an amazing team. You have been there when I have been asked by people, "What are you proudest of during your time in Congress?" You have always heard me give the exact same response, "I am proudest of my team."

A lot of the success that I have shared with you wouldn't have been possible without the tremendous team I have had. From the beginning, I had an office led by Jonathan Smith in D.C. and by Meadow Johnson in the district. They, and the rest of the team, got us

off to a great start. They had vision and hustle that set the tone for us.

Over time, Joe Dacca became my district director. Whether we were visiting the naval shipyard, rooting for the Huskies, or listening to 80's tunes circumnavigating the Olympic Peninsula, Joe was an amazing partner.

Rachel Kelly was a top-notch chief while I chaired the New Dems and the modernization committee. She was a tremendous leader for our team, especially during the tumult of the pandemic.

It was such a pleasure for me to watch the growth of Andrea Roper, who started as an intern on my campaign, became scheduler in my district office, and went on to become our district director and deputy chief of staff. She is a terrific professional, and I am proud of her.

Heather Painter and our policy team have been tenacious about getting pucks into the net for our constituents. Heather is so talented. In fact, I won the lottery with talented leg. directors.

In addition to Heather, we had Katie Allen, who was a wizard on environmental issues and knew so much about salmon recovery and managing healthy forests.

We had Aaron Wasserman, who laid the foundation for our work with the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

My first LD, Kevin Warnke, always engaged with a strategic mind and with kindness.

I am grateful for every person who worked on our policy team over the years.

I have had such excellent team members who helped us communicate with our constituents: Stephen, Tim, Jason, Martha, and Ian, who led the way.

We had amazing schedulers in D.C. and in the district who made sure we always made time for our constituents, including Jolie and Tory, who are here today. I am grateful to each of them.

Cheri Williams has dedicated her life to helping our constituents and has had a talented group of caseworkers, including our longtime team member, Chantell Munoz. They have done so much good for so many people that I could spend my entire time telling stories of the wins they have gotten for the people we represent.

Sophie and Aven, I have had folks in the district, people you kids have met at events over the years, including, currently, Courtney, Haley, and Stephanie, and folks like Nicholas, Rob, Katy, MaryJane, Judith, and others who served our constituents for a long time and who have made sure we were available, accessible, and accountable to our constituents.

My current chief of staff, Andrew Wright, is everything Americans should want in their public servants: ethical, kind, visionary, someone who hustles, someone who looks for wins for the American people. In every role he has been in on our team, he has been just awesome. I am grateful for him.

I can't name everyone, but every person who worked on our team is worthy

of gratitude. Over the years, I have had absolutely outstanding folks who have worked in my district and D.C. offices, and I am so grateful for that and the fact that, without exception, they have focused on doing the right thing for our constituents.

I also thank the Irwin family for sharing their daughter Kate with us. Though Kate passed away a few years ago, I think about her often and have told colleagues and staffers her wise words during one of our last times together. She said, "This isn't have-to-do stuff; this is get-to-do stuff." She was an amazing young woman who made a very big difference in far too short a time.

I thank each and every team member who served the people of Washington's Sixth Congressional District during my time in office. Together, we made a real difference.

Sophie and Aven, whatever you do in your life, I hope you have a team as good as I have had—people who work hard, who do the right thing, and who care.

Sophie and Aven, it is good to have a crew. You have heard more about the New Democrat Coalition than most Americans and certainly than most teenagers. I was honored to serve as leader in the New Dems throughout my tenure in Congress, including serving as chair.

The New Dems are the best kept secret in politics, a group of pragmatic, problem-solving Democrats who chase impact more than headlines. Simply put, they are focused on getting things done for the American people. Politics could use more of that.

I thank Ron Kind and JIM HIMES for being mentors to me in that coalition as well as the New Dem staff, including former staff members like J.D. Grom and current leaders like Anne Sokolov and Leighton Huch, among others. I also thank Helen Milby, who has been the fairy godmother of the New Dems and an amazing friend to me.

Beyond that, I assure you that you can even find friends in the most unusual places, even in Congress. When I got to Congress, I was told, if you want a friend in this place, get a dog. I feel very lucky that my experience hasn't been like that at all.

Sophie and Aven, I am proud that you can sing the AMI BERA song and you know that he is a delight to travel with, that you speak of SCOTT PETERS like he is a superhero, and in many ways, he is. I am proud that you can do the DAN KILDEE handshake and that you know that he is an amazing roommate who has been with me on the toughest days here. I am proud that you know what to do for ADAM SCHIFF when you see the Dave Grohl autobiography and that you watched "The Big Lebowski" to honor him and his courageous leadership.

I am proud that you are wowed by friends like Abigail and Mikie, who are former CIA agents and helicopter pilots and who have such bright futures; that

you know JIM HIMES hosts a great dinner party and that when I met him, I told you that I would at least have one friend in Congress; that you know that LORI TRAHAN can get me to laugh on even the roughest of days; that you know PETE AGUILAR and I get into trouble when we sit next to each other at events, and that institution is stronger because PETE is one of its greatest leaders with a bright disposition, a willingness to have tough conversations on both sides of the aisle, and a passion for service.

Sophie and Aven, I am sort of tickled that when I read this note to you on the House floor, it will formally enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the names "Back Row Hecklers," "Rusty Butterknives," and "The Indespicables" into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

But whatever we call them, they are people I have broken bread with, talked about the world's problems with, been through a whole lot personally with, and I want each of them to know how grateful I am for them, for their friendship. Though I am moving on from Congress, I am confident I am not moving on from my friendships with them.

I appreciate my plane buddies, particularly SUZAN DELBENE, ADAM SMITH, DAN NEWHOUSE, and MARILYN STRICKLAND, who, in addition to being great leaders and partners, often made the time go faster on what really is a long flight. They have been amazing partners in standing up for our State.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge my former roommate and former colleague, Denny Heck, who is a great Lieutenant Governor and a dear friend who often shared his warm almonds with me on the plane.

I am thankful to the class of 2012 in Congress. What a dynamic group of people. Included among them are HAKEEM JEFFRIES and KATHERINE CLARK, both of whom are dear friends and stewards of this institution.

Outside of Congress, I have had an amazing support system of friends and family. I am grateful, Sophie and Aven, to your Uncles Ryan and Jason and to your grandparents. They have instilled in me an ethic of service and have supported me throughout. My mom and dad taught me the value of education and the importance of thinking before you speak, and they taught me one word—family.

□ 1200

Tim, Ryan, and Ray are the definition of friends, being there when I most needed a hand and spending a very long day with me.

Turi Widsteen has been my longest friend, and her family has been important to me for decades.

Andy Weinstein and Jon Goldman, my college roommates, with whom I have shared music and laughter and ups and downs, have been there from the beginning.

Sue and Chad have been rays of sunshine while working in a place that occasionally needs more sunshine.

I enjoy thinking about leadership, asking all of the questions, and visiting Abe at the Lincoln Memorial with Lauren.

I want to voice special gratitude to J.J. Balaban, who has been the most extraordinary adviser and friend a guy could ask for. I would not have served in Congress had it not been for his advice and help. Since I get to put this into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, I want to say this: I love you, J.

I have learned how lucky I am to have such good friends.

Finally, Sophie and Aven, I have learned how lucky I am to be your dad. I am grateful to you both. You were 3 and 6 when I was elected to this job. You are now 15 and 18. Over the years, you have come with me to fairs and festivals, parades and party events. You have met two Presidents and even talked about SpongeBob SquarePants with President Obama in the Oval Office. I hope some of those experiences are amazing memories for you, just as they are for me.

Having said that, as nourishing as this job has been, in some respects I know it has come with profound costs for our family. Every theatrical performance and musical recital I missed, every family dinner I wasn't there for all had an impact on our family.

I thank your mom for supporting me personally and professionally. I thank her for supporting our family during some tough times, particularly when I was in Washington, D.C. Though our marriage didn't last, my gratitude to her does.

Sophie and Aven, I am conscious that I didn't always deliver in the way I wanted, and I hope you will forgive me for that. I hope you know that I was really trying my best to make the world better for you and for your generation.

I want you to know how proud of you I am. You are informed. You are inquisitive. You can walk into a room of adults and make conversation about the events of the world. You have learned to use your voices in powerful ways. You can study politics or be involved in JROTC, and people see you as leaders.

You have become terrific citizens in a way that makes me proud, that would make your oma proud.

I remember sitting right over there in January of 2013 when I was sworn into this body. Aven didn't last long, but Sophie sat by my side when I got sworn in. When the ceremony was over, Sophie, you looked at me and said: Why was that supposed to be special?

I hope, after 12 years of service in Congress, you see that this was special, that the capacity to work to try to solve problems for our region is, indeed, a special honor. I hope, despite personal setbacks and frustrations with our politics, you come away with hope.

As I wrap up two decades in public service, I am so grateful for the people of the Sixth Congressional District for

giving me the honor of representing them. As I conclude this role on their behalf, I am hopeful.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once wrote:

Optimism and hope are not the same thing. Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better. Hope is the belief that if we work hard enough, together, we can make things better.

He also wrote:

It needs no courage to be an optimist, but it does take a great deal of courage to hope.

Sophie and Aven, the task ahead for each of us, myself included, though soon from outside this building, is to be a part of that, to work together to make things better, to have hope.

Sophie and Aven, have hope. Be good. I love you.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan, DAN KILDEE, my friend.

I AM HONORED TO HAVE SERVED MID-MICHIGAN
IN CONGRESS

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank my friend and colleague, Mr. KILMER.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the House for the last time as a Member of this historic symbol of our democracy.

It has been the honor of my lifetime to serve my hometown and the people of mid-Michigan in Congress. I am so grateful to my constituents for putting their trust and faith in me to represent them for the last 12 years.

Every day that I have been in public service, I have been focused on doing what I can to improve the lives of the people back home. I am so very proud of the work that we have been able to accomplish together to make Michigan a better place.

I am particularly proud of what we have done to revitalize our manufacturing base and to bring jobs back to this country. As I have said a few times in this Chamber, I am from Flint, my hometown, so I know firsthand about how unfair trade deals and the lack of industrial policy has hurt working families in the communities that I represent.

In Congress, I got to work. As a member of the Ways and Means Committee, I helped to replace NAFTA with a better deal for America's workers. Under a Democratic Congress, we passed new laws like the CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the bipartisan infrastructure law to incentivize us to make things in America. Those manufacturing policies strengthen our manufacturing and our U.S. supply chains. The real important aspect of that is it has grown our local economy.

These laws have worked. Already in mid-Michigan, we have seen major companies expand and invest like SK siltron in Bay City, Hemlock Semiconductor in Saginaw, and NanoGraf right in my home county, Genesee County. These companies are hiring hundreds of workers to produce American-made semiconductors, advanced manufacturing chips, and electric battery materials to help ensure that America

leads the way in manufacturing in the 21st century.

To lower costs for families, again, I got to work passing new laws to put more money in the pockets of hard-working Michiganians. We authored the electric vehicle tax credit. We expanded the child tax credit to lower costs. In fact, I consider the refundable tax credit, the child tax credit, to be perhaps the best vote I have cast in my career in public office.

We all come to Congress with our own priorities. Revitalizing mid-Michigan manufacturing was certainly one of mine. The beauty of public service is that we are always learning something new from the people that we work for, from our constituents.

I am very grateful to advocates in my district who first educated me on one of those issues, and that is the issue of PFAS contamination, chemical contamination. Today, most Americans now know the dangers of PFAS to their health and the environment, but back then when we first got started on this, most Members of Congress couldn't even spell PFAS, let alone know what it is.

I first heard from constituents like Cathy Wusterbarth and Tony Spaniola about water quality issues in Oscoda, and we got to work urging faster clean-up of PFAS contamination surrounding the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base.

I helped establish with my friend, BRIAN FITZPATRICK, the first Congressional PFAS Task Force, which brought together Democrats and Republicans around this issue to more urgently address a real public health threat and to ensure that those exposed, and especially our servicemembers, have access to the healthcare that they deserve.

Finally, after years of advocacy, we have made progress. This year, the Biden administration announced the first-ever drinking water standard for PFAS and designated certain PFAS chemicals as hazardous substances to ensure the polluters, not taxpayers, have to pay to clean up that contamination.

There is a lot more work we have to do to deal with cleanup of PFAS chemicals, but I am proud of what we have done and I am proud that we have done it by working together in a bipartisan fashion. I look forward to watching what my colleagues will do to continue to address this really important public health issue.

Of course, throughout my time in Congress, the issue of clean drinking water has defined much of my work. In the richest country on the planet, at the richest moment in its history, drinking water should be something that is a right, not a privilege.

One of my really proudest accomplishments here in Congress was working to provide real relief to Flint families during that terrible Flint water crisis. I worked to replace those lead pipes, expand healthcare services, and to establish the Flint Registry, which

gives access to ongoing support for the long-term effects of that terrible crisis.

What happened in my hometown wasn't an anomaly. It was a warning to the rest of the country that we have got to be serious about commonsense regulations to protect public health. From the moment that that manmade crisis began, I knew we had to get to work.

Throughout the crisis, I organized numerous delegations of Members of Congress to come to my hometown of Flint. Democrats and Republicans responded. They came and met directly with the families affected by this terrible crisis. They learned about the decisions that led to the crisis in the first place, and they helped build support for Federal action.

I brought President Obama to Flint to hold a townhall with the families affected. For over 2 years, I worked with the Obama administration to expand Medicaid, Head Start, and healthy nutrition programs for families that really needed those supports because of the exposure to lead.

Because of that work, in 2016, despite the fact that then, like now, I was serving in the minority, I was able to secure \$170 million in an aid package to help replace those terrible lead service lines, to create the Flint Registry, and to expand healthcare services.

I will be forever grateful to Speaker Emerita NANCY PELOSI, then our Democratic leader, who recognized that a Republican majority needed Democratic votes to pass a year-end budget bill, and she deputized me to go finish the deal. She sent me directly over to meet with Speaker Ryan, and we were able to include that single Democratic priority in that budget bill that provided the aid to the families of Flint.

As I also prepare to leave Congress, I am frequently asked, what will I miss the most. It is not hard to list the things I won't miss. It is also not tough to list those things I will miss the most: the friendships that I have made in this body. I thank my colleagues.

First and foremost, to Michigan's congressional delegation, it has been a real honor to be the dean of our Democratic delegation and to work alongside our two great Senators, Senator DEBBIE STABENOW and Senator GARY PETERS and to previously be able to work with one of my mentors, the late Senator Carl Levin. We came together to protect the Great Lakes, to support the hardworking men and women of the auto industry, and to clean up that terrible PFAS contamination that I mentioned.

Specifically, to Speaker PELOSI, a masterful legislator, a masterful tactician: Simply put there is no one better in this business or who I have learned more from. I thank her for never forgetting about the people of Flint and always fighting for America's children, to give a punch and to take a punch for those kids. She has done that her whole career.

Democratic leader HAKEEM JEFFRIES is a true and honest friend, a classmate

from our 2012 class. We often joke about how the term “my good friend” is tossed about in this body pretty loosely, but he is an honest and true friend and an incredible leader for our House Democratic Caucus. I thank him for the trust that he placed in me to serve in the House Democratic leadership and to serve as the co-chair of the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.

Hakeem and I came to Congress together, along with an amazing group of people in 2012. They are all friends. We share a special bond. I am especially grateful to three members of my class—one of whom you just heard from—who are not just friends but became my roommates over the years: JARED HUFFMAN from California; of course, DEREK KILMER, my buddy from Washington State; and AMI BERA, also from California. They have not only been roommates, but in that role have helped me get through some of the good times. They also were there as a listening ear to help me get through some of the really tough personal challenges that I faced during my time here in Congress. These are friendships that will last forever.

There are other groups—the baseball team, the guys in the corner, and the indispicables—Congressman KILMER mentioned them. We will explain that off the record. Two of them are here, DEREK KILMER, of course, and ADAM SCHIFF, a group that we have been able to bond over and strategize with and sometimes just listen to one another. Those friendships will go on and on. Even though ADAM is moving over to the Senate, I expect he will still remember our names.

To my chairman, RICHIE NEAL, the chairman of the oldest, and what I think to be the most powerful committee in Congress, the Ways and Means Committee, serving on that committee, especially under the leadership of RICHIE NEAL has been some of the most meaningful work of my career: to pass fair trade deals, to cut the cost of insulin, to protect Social Security and Medicare and to cut taxes for working families, and especially expanding that child tax credit.

□ 1215

Mr. Speaker, it has been one of the greatest honors of my lifetime, of course, to work with the people here.

One of them was a special friend, a person who I was very fortunate to get to know first as a person I admired from a distance but then became a colleague and a true friend. I am, of course, talking about the late John Lewis.

I remember when we first got here how many times we would say to one another: As rough as it was, aren't we lucky we get to go to work every day with John Lewis?

I remember literally sitting on the floor here when John led an effort to call attention to gun violence. It is the kind of good trouble that John was

known for. I was happy to participate in that moment, never fully understanding until recently what devastating impact the pain of gun violence can have on families across the country. I am now one of those families. I didn't know it then.

I got to call John Lewis for the last few months of his life every single time that we had a vote on the floor of the House because he designated me to cast his vote for him during the COVID proxy rules. He was too ill to be here.

He gave me this incredible gift to vote for myself and Michigan's Fifth District and then to come to that podium and announce to this Congress that I was about to cast a vote on behalf of the gentleman from Georgia's Fifth District, John Lewis. The person known most for the precious right to vote gave me a gift I will carry with me for the rest of my life, and that was the opportunity to carry his vote to the floor of this House.

I thank my extended family, really, my staff. To the dozens of team members, the past and present members of my crew, thanks for your hard work, for your dedication. I have really had the most talented and selfless team, dedicated D.C. and district staff. I could have ever hoped for. They pour their hearts, their souls, and themselves into this work.

I have often told my staff that, while I carry the voting card and wear this pin on my lapel, they serve in Congress. They have done that extraordinarily well.

I especially thank my longtime chief of staff, Mitchell Rivard, who has been with me not just since my campaign but who came to work for me even when I launched my campaign in 2011. He has been with me ever since, on the good days and on the days that were not so good, like being sworn in for first time. Then, he and I were both here in the Capitol on that terrible day, January 6. He has become like family. He has done an outstanding job leading my team, and I am excited for the great things that each of my team members will accomplish as they move forward.

Mitchell and my district director, Jacob Bennett, were with me from the day I came to Congress until the day we packed up the office to go home. The country is really fortunate that they will both continue to serve in this institution.

I want to thank a couple of my other team members who were with me for most of my time here, Jordan Dickinson and Ghada Alkiek, who I have known since they were probably too young to vote. They have been an important part of this experience for me.

I said many times that while I have been elected to lots of different public roles, I have never felt I changed jobs. I just got different business cards and a different toolbox to do my work because my job responsibilities have been the same, which are serving, working for, and representing those people who I work for.

I was first elected to public office when I was 18 years old. Five decades later—hard to believe—I continue to love public service and believe that this important work is that, important and honorable service.

For me, it is time to go home. As I reflect on my time in Congress, I am thinking about the future. I am excited to see that Michigan has elected to be represented by a soon-to-be new Member of Congress, Kristen McDonald Rivet. I know Kristen. She will be a great, commonsense, pragmatic leader for our area. I am especially proud that I helped to elect the first woman ever to represent this district in Congress.

While I am stepping back from public office at the end of my term, I am most definitely not retiring. I am looking forward to a new chapter, continuing to serve Flint and that region but just outside of elected office.

I have a lot of friends to thank for helping me get here, and it is impossible for me to list all of them. I do want to mention one of them.

Larry Rosenthal would have turned 62 today. He has been my friend for almost 40 years, my closest political adviser, my confidant. We lost Larry over the summer. I wouldn't have been a Member of Congress without him. I wouldn't have been as successful as a Member of Congress without him being at my side, and he was there every step of the way. He really was family.

To my family, especially my wife, Jennifer, I say thank you. She has stood by me and given up the most through my public service here. I know, at least I think, she will be glad that I will be home full time. She has put up with a lot.

Thank you, Jennifer.

She has done so while having to deal with her own health struggles. She is my hero.

I am grateful to my kids, to my son Ryan, my daughter-in-law, Ginger, and their children, the two most perfect grandchildren to ever occupy the Earth, Caitlin and Colin.

To my son Kenneth, who lives in New York, and my daughter, Katy, they have put up with my schedule. They have given me the reason and the inspiration to continue to fight on. They have supported and defended me, even when the unfair critics chose to take their grievances to them instead of directly to me.

To my mom, Margaret, my greatest defender, and my late father, Jack, I thank you for all you did to make this journey possible. I was happy to look into this gallery 12 years ago and to see you as I took this oath of office. I miss my dad every day, but I know, when I watched them up there, how proud he was. Thinking of that day still makes me smile.

To my siblings, most especially my late brother, Tim, who we tragically lost this past March, they and their families were always a part of this experience, so much that one of my former staff, Ghada Alkiek, once

coined the term the B.I.C. for my family, the Built-In Crowd.

My family has endured a lot. I wouldn't be who I am, and we couldn't endure the recent pain our family has experienced, without one another.

Of course, I want to mention my late uncle, Dale Kildee, my predecessor in Congress, a mentor and a teacher to me since childhood. He was a man who set an example, an example that I have tried to live up to, that you can fight hard for the things you believe in and still respect the human dignity of everybody around you, even those with whom you disagree.

Thank you, Dale, for that lesson. Congress needs to heed your example now more than ever, and that lesson has been tested even on me. I still remember the chair I sat in and the wall I hid myself behind on January 6, knowing that some of the people who I share this Chamber with contributed to the necessary precondition for that attack.

I have not been able to look at them the same. I have tried to take the lessons that my uncle provided me and continue to treat those people with dignity. It has been a challenge, but it is one I believe I have been able to overcome. I encourage future Congresses to continue to look at Dale Kildee as an example.

Mr. Speaker, I will end where I started, expressing my deepest and most sincere gratitude to the people of my home communities and to the people in Michigan. It has been an honor of a lifetime to be your voice. I did my best. I will see you back home.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the very final time, I yield back.

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL

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

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to report that the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency has homed in on perhaps the single-greatest example of government waste in United States history, and that is California's high-speed rail boondoggle.

Here are the facts that the DOGE X handle cited, all of which are true.

The high-speed rail project was originally projected in 2008 to cost \$33 billion. It is now projected to cost up to \$127.9 billion.

Its estimated completion date was 2020. Of course, we are past 2020 now. As of 2024, zero passengers have been transported. Indeed, the majority of the system has not even been fully designed, yet it has received \$6.8 billion in Federal funds, and they are requesting an additional \$8 billion in Federal funds.

In short, the cost has quadrupled, and nothing has been built. Actually, I am being a little bit unfair. There was an announcement earlier this year in May

where the High-Speed Rail Authority, which really has to strain to come up with milestones to advertise to the public—there was a lot of hoopla surrounding the unveiling of an \$11 billion bridge to nowhere that took 9 years to build, which is about the only thing that the High-Speed Rail Authority has to show for its efforts over the last 16 years.

A few years ago, The New York Times did an expose, reporting that at the current pace, the high-speed rail project will not be completed this century. I actually asked Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg whether he agreed with The New York Times' assessment. He said that, yes, it will be completed this century, although I gave him several opportunities to give his own estimation of when it will be completed and he declined to do so.

To give you a sense of how bad things are, in the early days of the project, the lead operator abandoned the project to go build a rail system in North Africa because they said that it was less politically dysfunctional there than in California. That operator, by the way, brought a high-speed train online in Morocco in 2018.

High-speed trains are not impossible to build. Californians and Americans travel abroad, and they ride them. They ask why we can't have them here. It is just impossible in California because of stratospheric levels of political incompetence.

Indeed, the head of the California High-Speed Rail Authority testified last year that the project is \$100 billion short in funding. In spite of all the billions that have been poured in by California taxpayers and through Federal support, there is still a funding gap of \$100 billion.

This was the former head of the California High-Speed Rail Authority because they have since gotten a new one, and they are now up to five CEOs throughout the life of the project. The number of CEOs outnumber the number of passengers five to zero.

What are some of the things that some of these past leaders of the high-speed rail project have had to say about it? Well, you can ask Michael Tennenbaum, who was the first chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority. He said, "I realized the system didn't work. . . . I don't know how they can build it now."

There is also Dan Richard, the longest serving chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, who said, "I don't think it is an existing project. It is a loser."

Rich Tolmach, the head of the California Rail Foundation, said, "It will never be operable."

Former Governor of California Jerry Brown, perhaps the biggest supporter of the project, has derided opponents of the train as small-minded people, but this is an incredibly small-minded project. In fact, it is a nonexistent project at this point in time.

Even if built, even if the high-speed train magically materializes by the

end of the decade, it will still be yesterday's technology.

□ 1230

China, right now, is working on a train that they are planning to complete by the end of the decade that will go up to a 1,000 kilometers per hour. At this point, it is past time to stop throwing good money after bad. We should end all Federal support for the high-speed rail project because that Federal support is keeping the project on life support, and is then forcing California taxpayers to continue to pay billions and billions of dollars more.

Meanwhile, our roads are among the very worst in the country despite us paying the highest taxes in the country. That is the very definition, by the way, of inefficiency, when you pay the most and get the least in return.

The high-speed rail, in short, is a staggering waste of taxpayer dollars that fails to meet the transportation needs of either today or tomorrow. I look forward to working with the new DOGE commission and my colleagues here in the House to see that we bring this boondoggle to an end once and for all.

PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S VALUES

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, this last week, California Governor Gavin Newsom called a special emergency session of the legislature for the purpose of Trump proofing California or protecting California values.

There is a question of whether this session is even legal given that the State constitution allows for a special session to be called under extraordinary circumstances, and you might wonder whether the result of a dually conducted Presidential election could truly constitute extraordinary circumstance.

More than that, it is clearly a farce despite the Governor's claims that this is an emergency situation. It was such an emergency that they gavelled in for about an hour and then went home for a month without passing any legislation.

We should just examine the Governor's claim that we need to protect California values, protect the status quo in California against any forces of reform that may be coming from Washington, D.C.

What exactly is the Governor aiming to protect? Is it California's national lead when it comes to homelessness, the fact we have half the unsheltered homeless in the entire country? Is that what Governor Newsom is aiming to protect?

Is it our poverty rate that is the highest in the Nation? Is he looking to protect our lead when it comes to poverty? When it comes to retail crime, does he want to maintain the number one record for the worst retail crime in the country?

Does he want to maintain the number one spot when it comes to antibusiness regulations, or when it comes to frivolous lawsuits, or when it comes to unemployment.