

is a fighting force designed to protect our Nation and ensure global stability.

The American people as well should be confident that with Pete Hegseth, President Trump's pick for Secretary of Defense, at the helm we can trust that the Department of Defense will prioritize ending divisive ideologies and enhancing military readiness.

As well, there are some who argue we could cut more from defense spending. This bill represents a modest 1 percent increase over last year's budget, but it is a critical investment in our safety and future.

Do we need more efficiency measures? Yes, we DOGE.

Next year, with the new administration, we will make our defense spending leaner, sharper, and more effective and always putting America first.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about prioritizing what truly matters: military readiness, modernization, and the security of the American people rather than a social and ideological agenda.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this bill and in supporting our troops.

2025 NDAA DELIVERS CRITICAL RESOURCES

Mr. MEUSER. Mr. Speaker, supporting our servicemembers and their families is absolutely essential to ensuring our military readiness and ensuring the United States has the greatest fighting force in the world. That is why I and many are urging all our colleagues to support the NDAA, which we will be voting on tonight, which prioritizes the well-being of those who defend our freedom.

This bill delivers critical resources: improved housing through investments aimed at upgrading military facilities, better health coverage for servicemembers and their families, expanded accessibility of childcare and enhanced support for military spouses, including professional licensing portability programs.

It also authorizes a significant pay raise for servicemembers, with a 14.5 percent increase for junior enlisted personnel and a 4.5 percent for all other ranks. This will provide the recognition and compensation they have earned and deserve. As well, this legislation tackles pressing challenges facing our Nation, strengthens our southern border by allocating funding for advanced surveillance technology and additional personnel, counters rising aggression from China by supporting increased funding for Indo-Pacific defense initiatives, and reaffirms our unwavering commitment to Israel by authorizing continued funding for missile defense systems like the Iron Dome.

House Republicans are committed to cutting wasteful spending, slashing the so-called military bureaucracy, and standing with those who fight for our country. This NDAA reflects that commitment by ensuring our Armed Forces have the resources they need, whether on the front lines or here at home.

By passing this bill, we are making sure our military is prepared to meet

today's challenges while safeguarding the freedoms of tomorrow.

HONORING NIKKI GIOVANNI

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

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Mr. Speaker:

I was born in the congo
I walked to the fertile crescent and built the sphinx
I designed a pyramid so tough that a star that only glows every one hundred years falls into the center giving divine perfect light
I am bad
I sat on the throne drinking nectar with allah
I got hot and sent an ice age to europe to cool my thirst
My oldest daughter is Nefertiti the tears from my birth pains created the Nile
I am a beautiful woman
I gazed on the forest and burned out the Sahara desert with a packet of goat's meat and a change of clothes
I crossed it in two hours
I am a gazelle so swift so swift you can't catch me

For a birthday present when he was three I gave my son Hannibal an elephant
He gave me Rome for mother's day
My strength flows ever on
My son Noah built new/ark and I stood proudly at the helm as we sailed on a soft summer day

I turned myself into myself and was Jesus
men intone my loving name
All praises All praises
I am the one who would save
I sowed diamonds in my back yard
My bowels deliver uranium the filings from my fingernails are semi-precious jewels
On a trip north
I caught a cold and blew
My nose giving oil to the Arab world
I am so hip even my errors are correct
I sailed west to reach east and had to round off the earth as I went
The hair from my head thinned and gold was laid across three continents
I am so perfect so divine so ethereal so surreal
I cannot be comprehended except by my permission
I mean . . . I . . . can fly like a bird in the sky . . .

Mr. Speaker, this poem, "ego-tripping," sparked my interest as a child, growing up in the South from my favorite poet, Nikki Giovanni, who passed earlier this week.

Nikki was one of the leading voices of the 1960s Black arts movement, with one writer naming her the "poet of the Black revolution." Her work focused on race, gender, politics, love, and joy. Through poetry, children and nonfiction books, and spoken word albums, she celebrated Black America and Black liberation. As a young girl, I could see myself reflected in her work.

She dedicated herself to uplifting and empowering other Black women writers, publishing an anthology of poetry written by Black women.

Nikki was a fierce voting rights advocate and fought to ensure everyone could make their voices heard at the ballot box.

She taught at several universities, culminating for 35 years at Virginia Tech, where she retired in 2022 as a distinguished professor of English. She received countless awards and accolades and was a groundbreaking literary giant.

When the Virginia Tech community mourned the lives of 32 people killed by a gunman in 2007, she honored them with a poem entitled, "We are Virginia Tech," in which she said:

We are sad today, and we will be sad for quite a while.
We are not moving on, we are embracing our mourning.
We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly, we are brave enough to bend to cry, and we are sad enough to know that we must laugh again.

Nikki Giovanni has flown away home, and we will be sad for quite a while, but her words leave a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire generations to come.

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HONORING THE LIFE OF DANIEL HOWARD BRADLEY

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of Daniel Howard Bradley of Savannah, Georgia.

Mr. Bradley sadly passed away on December 3 in the presence of his family. Born at the old Telfair Hospital in Savannah, Mr. Bradley was a lifelong resident of Savannah. He attended local schools and earned his degree in industrial management from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Mr. Bradley was an extremely hardworking individual, serving as the president of the Dixie Plywood Company for over 56 years.

Mr. Bradley also remained active in the Georgia Tech community for many years. He served as a trustee of the Georgia Tech National Alumni Association, a member of the Georgia Tech National Advisory Board, and a member of the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program, and several others.

For over 76 years, Mr. Bradley was an active member of the Wesley Monumental United Methodist Church, serving on several boards within the community. It is here that I met Mr. Bradley, and I will tell you, he was one of the finest men I have ever met. He also served on the advisory board of the Salvation Army for two decades.

Mr. Bradley was a generous, faithful man, known by all for his integrity and loyalty. He will be greatly missed, and my heart goes out to his friends and family.

CONGRATULATING EFFINGHAM COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate five Effingham County Middle School students on their selection for the REACH Georgia scholarship.

The recipients of this scholarship are Grace Mouhon of Effingham County Middle School, Armon'e Burt and Kellan Langford of Ebenezer Middle School, and Joel Barrera and Ryder English of South Effingham Middle School.

At the end of November, all five students signed their REACH Georgia scholarship contracts alongside each other. Due to their stellar academic performance and outstanding attendance and behavior, these students will graduate high school with a \$10,000 scholarship that is eligible for use at HOPE institutions.

Each student must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5, work with mentors, and remain drug- and alcohol-free throughout high school.

Our district is incredibly proud of these hardworking, accomplished students. I look forward to the opportunity to follow the future successes of these students, and I wish them the very best along their academic journey.

HONORING DAN WRIGHT

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of Dan Wright.

Mr. Wright, nicknamed "Skip," acquired the name from his father, who enlisted in the Army as a captain after his graduation from dental school.

Mr. Wright was an excellent athlete throughout his life. He showcased his athletic prowess as an outstanding football player and a black-diamond skier.

Mr. Wright attended school at the Citadel prior to being drafted into the Vietnam war, where he received a Bronze Star for his service to his beloved country.

Upon his return home, Mr. Wright finished school at East Carolina State with a degree in business and finance, which propelled him into his impressive career as a mortgage banker in both Atlanta and St. Simons until his retirement. He was a dedicated member of both Christ Church Frederica and his cherished golf club, Sea Island.

Mr. Wright was preceded in death by his two sons, Dan and Thomas, and his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Wright.

Mr. Wright will be greatly missed by his friends, family, and golf partners. My heart goes out to all of them.

IN MEMORY OF SENATOR FRED HARRIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Fred Harris, a Senator, civil rights and Tribal advocate, Presidential candidate, chairman, professor, and so much more to the people lucky enough to have known him.

The title that I love best for my dear friend is "radical optimist." In times when we might despair, like the time

we find ourselves in now, Fred never gave in to fatalism. Instead, Fred asked each of us to charge ahead with commitment and courage. His radical optimism was not passive but proactive.

He called upon us to each act with purpose and passion, to find the unique places where each of us could lend our action to change the direction of the world to better. He called upon us to act collectively in the joy that comes from working together with friends and colleagues on a cause.

I first met Senator Harris as a young attorney working on Tribal issues in New Mexico. He shared stories of his work together with LaDonna Harris, his former wife, elevating Native American issues across this country.

Senator Harris sponsored the landmark bill to restore sacred Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo. He created the bipartisan alliance that led to President Richard Nixon signing that bill into law in 1970. Blue Lake became the touchstone and spark for the return of sacred lands to Tribal nations across this country.

Senator Harris and his beautiful wife, Margaret Elliston, herself a democracy hero, then became good friends as I myself ran for office. His deep laughter and inexhaustible supply of stories to illustrate a path forward helped me immensely over the last 5 years.

Harris' career included serving in Oklahoma and the United States Senate as chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Throughout his career and his many roles, he always led and listened with courage and empathy.

He was a strong supporter of and voted for—imagine this—the Voting Rights Act in 1965 during his first year in the United States Senate and continued to advocate until this year.

At the University of New Mexico, he founded the Fred Harris Internship Program. Since 2006, Congress has welcomed smart, dedicated New Mexicans to serve in our delegation offices. I have hosted and then hired Fred Harris interns because they bring with them the same radical optimism as their sponsor.

I hope his family takes solace in the fact that every intern and person whose life he touched will keep his spirit alive as they also bring his love of country, community, and service to their own life work.

Senator Harris' legacy will ring through history in the laughter and radical optimism he left us.

RECOGNIZING SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN'S 175TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my hometown newspaper, the Santa Fe New Mexican, on its 175th anniversary. The first issue of the paper was printed in 1849.

The New Mexican has brought stories to life about gold strikes, floods, votes on prohibition, and debates on statehood and whether women should have

the right to vote. It has shared stories of the struggles and strengths of the survivors of wildfires, informed voters about their local candidates, and anointed the best chili in the city.

To keep democracy strong, it made sure voters understood the positions and perspectives of local, Senate, Federal, and national candidates for office.

I myself like this one page from 1938 that juxtaposes the rise of fascism in Europe with Santa Fe's burning of old man gloom. My local newspaper was ahead of the curve. It took The New York Times 80 years before they reported on Zozobra.

Santa Feans, as the New Mexican has shown, have been choosing joy over fascism for over 100 years.

Stories matter, and who tells them matters just as much. That is why it is important that an independent paper with integrity, like the New Mexican, has been telling stories about our communities since it was founded. Papers like the New Mexican keep us well-informed and active citizens.

In this time of democracy at risk, we need papers like the New Mexican, and I am so happy to be on this floor to celebrate its anniversary.

MAKE AMERICA SAFE AGAIN

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

Mr. MANN. Mr. Speaker, for 4 years, the Biden administration's weak foreign policies allowed Communist China, Russia, Iran, and other adversaries to take full advantage of America. This weakness has put Americans in danger, made America less secure, and hurt America's reputation with our longstanding allies and friends.

When President Biden campaigned for President, he promised Americans that he would be a unifying figure. Rather than sticking to his word, he spent much of his tenure undoing President Trump's popular policies, foreign and domestic, regardless of their effectiveness.

This stubbornness and pure partisanship have backfired and made America less secure than it was just 4 years ago. For example, President Biden orchestrated the largest botched withdrawal of American troops of our generation when he abandoned vulnerable Americans in Afghanistan and allowed the Taliban to regain control and diminish the freedoms our country worked so hard to preserve.

When President Trump worked on the Doha agreement, he required the Taliban to curb terrorist activity in Afghanistan and the region. President Biden, on the other hand, never required the Taliban to agree to those same conditions, withdrew without a long-term strategy, and allowed terrorists to make themselves at home in Afghanistan once again.

President Biden's weakness on the world stage continues to be on full display in the Middle East in his appeasement strategy with the Iranian regime.