

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.

Iran is not America's friend. We all know that, yet President Biden ignores Iran's bad intentions and Iran's possession of resources that pose a great threat to our allies, including Israel.

While President Trump applied a maximum-pressure strategy that constrained Tehran financially, President Biden was at the helm as Iranian-backed militias attacked our troops more than 170 times without consequence. President Biden's so-called strategy only emboldened Hamas and other Iran-backed proxies to attack our ally Israel, launching the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Other adversaries are closely watching. China continues planning its invasion of Taiwan and increases its influence in America's absence. Just this week, several of my colleagues joined me in expressing concerns to President Biden about Communist China's growing influence at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. A recent proposal from the current FAO director-general and former Chinese Vice Minister would extend the director-general's tenure from 8 years to a decade, increase his already \$300,000 salary, and give Communist China more control of the U.S.-led World Food Program.

America cannot afford to sit by idly, even during our time of political transition, while China positions itself to expand its influence.

I have been blessed to grow up in a world where the United States has led the free world. I want my children, their children, and future generations to grow up in a similar world, but I understand that leadership didn't come from being passive or trying to tap dance around communism.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, one of Kansas' favorite sons, military hero, and our 34th United States President, dedicated his entire career to promoting freedom and waging peace. He helped shape the global U.S. leadership many of us know today. In his inaugural address, he said: "History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid."

Unfortunately, the Biden administration has chosen timidity and tiptoed approaches to foreign policy to placate far-left activists. Luckily, Mr. Speaker, this will soon be over. I would say to America that we got it right. President Trump is committed to securing American peace through strength and making it clear to our enemies that we will not tolerate any nonsense.

It is a new day in America, and the days of American weakness are gone. I look forward to working with President Trump and the incoming House and Senate Republican majorities to restore America's leadership and make the country safe again. Our brightest days are yet to come.

NYC SUBWAY CHOKING DEATH IS NOTHING TO CELEBRATE

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

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise because one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle has introduced legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal for heroism to Mr. Daniel Penny for choking a man to death on the New York City subway.

Just the other day, a New York City jury found Daniel Penny not guilty of the choke-hold death of Jordan Neely.

To think that Members of this body would consider the circumstances of this case to be anything other than a complete tragedy for everyone is cruel.

When a young man is suffering from a mental health breakdown and loses his life at the hands of a 24-year-old veteran, who is probably also suffering from a particular set of challenges, there is absolutely nothing to celebrate here.

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I say this, Mr. Speaker, because even the prosecutor said that Mr. Penny went too far. Mr. Neely was not just a Michael Jackson impersonator who was crying out, both hungry and thirsty. Mr. Neely was not a distressed person on a train or some kind of public nuisance, as was described. He was someone's son, he was somebody's friend, and he was no less a part of the fabric of this American mosaic as any one of us who rightfully stands here today.

Yes, no one could deny that Jordan Neely had challenges, but who among us does not have people in our districts who are suffering from all kinds of struggles and setbacks. Each and every one of us represent people who are wrestling with the vicissitudes of life each and every day.

Yes, like millions of Americans, Jordan Neely was homeless. He struggled from mental illness after his mother was murdered in 2007. In spite of all of his challenges, Mr. Neely was a human being. He was as much a person worthy of respect as anybody and no less deserving of compassion and de-escalation as any of us in this Chamber.

When he got on the train that day, he had no weapon, he had not touched anyone, and more importantly, he was asking for help. Instead of encountering kindness, he was choked to death.

Rather than being seen as a brother and a sister, we have become so heartless that we see each other as combatants in a war that none of us can win as long as we are committed to fighting each other.

I wonder today: Have we become so desensitized to cruelty that we would dare to celebrate savagery in this Chamber without regard for the tragic loss of life?

When a jury cannot determine that a man should not be executed for having a mental outburst, one wonders is this

the future of justice in America for people who are not well, for people who are not rich, for people not living in a home with locked doors and carpeted hallways?

There are over 110 billionaires who live in New York City, but Jordan was not one of those persons. The greatest amalgamation of wealth in the history of the world congregates in the city of New York, but Jordan Neely was not a part of it. Yet, he was as American as any of the captains of industry who work on Wall Street, who fly off to the Hamptons in order to enjoy their weekend pursuits.

All over the city of Chicago, people are wondering: If the racial roles were reversed, would Mr. Penny have been allowed to walk away without any accountability?

I find the jury decision to be appalling on many levels and not the least of which because all life is sacred. As long as one of us is disposable, then all of us are in the candidacy to fall victim to the reaffirming silence that allows evil to flourish.

The denunciation of cruelty should not be a partisan issue. We should not be so eager to run to our partisan corners when it comes to mental illness and the tragic loss of life.

I say to my colleagues and to the American people: There should be no medals for this act. There should be no knee-jerk partisan celebration that degrades the life of a man suffering from mental illness by making a mockery of his death.

I hope in the days to come, all of us will do what we can to inspire our constituents to find a more excellent way.

I pray that in the weeks to come, we will resist the temptation to give in to the darker impulses that live in the shadows of our great democratic experiment. We will, in the best of our ability, work to ensure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all who make this country their home.

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 33 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

PROCEEDINGS OF FORMER MEMBERS PROGRAM

The following proceedings were held before the House convened for morning-hour debate:

UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS 2024 ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

The meeting was called to order by the Honorable Donna F. Edwards, Vice President of Former Members of Congress Association, at 8:11 a.m.

PRAYER

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