

credible or because there was no indication of U.S. weapons use. The majority have proceeded to the "verification" stage, whereby, "We ask the [government of Israel] about the cases: Did you forewarn? Why did you hit this school or safe road or safe zone?" said one former official.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland), who has met with administration officials on several occasions to discuss the issue, said he has been deeply frustrated by what he called a lack of follow-through. "There's no set timeline for getting responses to the many ad hoc inquiries that have been made," Van Hollen said.

Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. military aid since World War II, and the Biden administration has provided it with at least \$17.9 billion in U.S. military assistance in the past year alone, according to a recent study by Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs.

But despite deepening alarm among administration officials and lawmakers over Israel's conduct of the Gaza war, nearly all military assistance, apart from a delayed shipment of 2,000-pound bombs, has continued to flow without interruption. The pace and volume of weaponry have meant that U.S. munitions make up a substantial portion of Israel's arsenal, with an American-made fleet of warplanes to deliver the heaviest bombs to their targets, analysts say.

William D. Hartung, a co-author of the Watson Institute report and an expert on the arms industry and the U.S. military budget at the Quincy Institute, said "it's almost impossible" that Israel is not violating U.S. law, "given the level of slaughter that's going on and the preponderance of U.S. weapons."

Among the cases submitted to the State Department, according to people familiar with the matter, are the January killing of a 6 year-old girl and her family in their car, with pieces of a U.S.-made 120mm tank round purportedly found at the scene. There were shards of American-made small-diameter bombs photographed at a family's home and at a school sheltering displaced civilians after airstrikes in May killed dozens of women and children. And there was the tail fin of a Boeing-manufactured Joint Direct Attack Munition on the scene of a July airstrike that killed at least 90 Palestinians.

"The U.S. is the biggest donor to Israel with these weapons," said Sarah Yager, the Washington director at Human Rights Watch. "And it's a year in. When is the United States going to put its foot down?"

CHALLENGES CAUSED BY SHARED ZIP CODES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LALOTA. Madam Speaker, for far too long, my constituents who live in Flanders, Riverside, and Northampton have faced unnecessary challenges caused by shared ZIP Codes. Misdelayed mail, delays in receiving essential medications, and confusion over geographic identity have disrupted their daily lives for decades.

Last week, we took meaningful steps to address these persistent issues by ensuring that each of these communities has access to reliable mail delivery and U.S. postal services.

H.R. 8753, which I proudly supported, directs the United States Postal Service to designate single, unique ZIP

Codes for these communities. This simple, commonsense fix will go a long way in improving the quality of life for my constituents in Flanders, Riverside, and Northampton.

By taking this step, we sent a clear message that every community, no matter how large or small, deserves accurate and dependable services from their government.

I thank the residents of Northampton, Riverside, and Flanders for their unwavering determination to bring this issue to our attention. This is a battle these communities have been fighting for more than a decade. I am proud to see it finally coming to fruition here in the House.

IMPORTANCE OF STRONG FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Mr. LALOTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to underscore the importance of strong Federal investments in research and education, which are critical to maintaining America's position as a global leader in innovation and progress.

Stony Brook University, located in my district, is a prime example of the extraordinary advancements that come from such support. As one of the Nation's leading public research institutions, Stony Brook excels in quantum physics, artificial intelligence, and healthcare. Their groundbreaking work drives economic growth on Long Island, throughout New York State, and across the Nation while pushing the boundaries of scientific discovery.

Stony Brook's role as a quantum internet testbed and its status as a hub of transformative research demonstrates the immense potential of continued Federal investment in higher education.

Institutions like Stony Brook don't just shape our present. They are laying the groundwork to become the next premier research institution, setting the standard for excellence in education, research, and innovation. I am committed to ensuring that institutions like Stony Brook have the resources needed to thrive, securing our Nation's leadership in education, research, and innovation. Let's go.

GOVERNOR HOCHUL'S COMMUTER TAX

Mr. LALOTA. Madam Speaker, Governor Hochul's so-called congestion pricing is just a commuter tax that unfairly targets hardworking Long Islanders. With families already struggling under New York's crushing tax burden, this plan adds insult to injury, forcing suburban communities to subsidize the wasteful and mismanaged MTA.

The MTA loses nearly \$700 million annually to fare evasion—over \$300 million on buses alone—and doles out six-figure overtime to hundreds of employees.

Instead of addressing these failures, Hochul and her New York City allies want suburban New Yorkers like my constituents to fill a \$15 billion budget funding gap without any reforms or accountability.

Hochul suspended this ill-conceived commuter tax before the election but shamelessly brought it back afterward, breaking the trust of so many New Yorkers.

Long Island deserves better—real accountability, fairness, and policies that reflect our priorities, not another slap in the face from Albany's one-party, antisuburban agenda.

WELCOMING KAI LI HOME

Mr. LALOTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate an extraordinary moment of triumph and resilience.

After 8 long years of wrongful detention in China, my constituent and Huntington resident Kai Li is finally back on American soil and has been reunited with his family. This long-awaited news brings immense relief and joy to his family and every Long Islander who has followed his adversity.

Kai's release ends an unimaginable ordeal and highlights the unwavering strength of his family, especially his son, Harrison, who tirelessly advocated for his father's return. I was honored to bring Harrison as my guest to this year's State of the Union to amplify his family's story. Kai's release is not only a victory for the Li family but for all of America.

The United States must remain steadfast in our commitment to bring home every wrongfully detained American. Kai Li's return reminds us of the power of persistence and the importance of standing firm against injustice.

Welcome home to Kai, whose courage and determination inspire us all.

RECOGNIZING TOM LANNEN ON HIS RETIREMENT

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

Ms. PEREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the career and recognize the retirement of Skamania County Commissioner Tom Lannen.

Tom wasn't born here, but he got here as fast as he could. He is internationally famous in Washington State, serving as the chair of the Washington State Association of Counties' Timber Caucus.

Tom pioneered the use of "the stick," a yardstick that visually demonstrates the fact that our county, Skamania County, has only 1.8 percent of our acreage which can generate tax revenue.

Tom won't let his Federal Representatives forget how much Skamania County needs their mills to produce timber, the Secure Rural Schools program to keep our schools open, and economic development opportunities to ensure that communities thrive.

Madam Speaker, I thank Tom for his mentorship and leadership and for spending time working on behalf of things that matter, our community. I hope he enjoys his retirement with Sophia and wish him the very best.

BALLOT BOX FIRE

Ms. PEREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the fire that was set to a ballot box in my district on October 28. We still don't know who did this, but we know who did not do this. Real patriots don't torch each other's ballots. It was an attack on our democracy and our rule of law.

The fire destroyed hundreds of ballots. Although our incredible election workers tried to recover as many votes as possible and contact those whose ballots were partially burned, many votes were lost.

If people want to live in a society where ballots are burned, they can move there. My community will not stand for this spineless, shameful, and unpatriotic BS.

I thank our first responders for dealing with this fire in such a timely and efficient manner. Ballot recovery would not have been possible if it were not for them.

Another thank-you goes to those who stood guard at the local ballot boxes 24/7 following the fire, a precaution that never should have been necessary in the first place.

I promise to all of southwest Washington that I will always fight against political violence and protect our sacred right to vote in our communities.

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DENNIS WEBER RETIREMENT

Ms. PEREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dennis Weber on his upcoming retirement from the Cowlitz County Board of Commissioners after serving as commissioner for 12 years and in the public sector for 40 years.

Dennis has spent his career being a pillar for our community. He spent many years as a social studies teacher before transitioning to roles in public office.

He has been an excellent advocate with the Spirit Lake/Toutle-Cowlitz River Collaborative to help protect downstream communities, project collaboration, and good, accessible data.

I have been privileged to work with Dennis over the years. When I helped reintroduce the National Landslide Preparedness Act, Dennis helped to provide testimony from Cowlitz County.

Dennis Weber has shown time and again what it means to be a public servant. He has always worked to ensure his community gets the resources and support they need. His priority has always been for the betterment of his hometown, and that has been evident in every chapter of his career. I thank Dennis for all he has done for southwest Washington. I hope retirement treats him well.

CHRISTMAS TREES

Ms. PEREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a beloved holiday tradition and an important part of my district's culture: Christmas trees.

My district produces the second-most number of Christmas trees in the coun-

try. Coming from a family of loggers myself, I know firsthand how important it is to be a steward of the land, to depend on it, not just as a terrarium, but as part of your culture.

Our support and value for the forest products that come from our woods is engrained in our ethos. For generations, Washingtonians have used our trees to build and furnish their homes.

The holiday season offers us a unique opportunity to display and decorate the trees that we are so proud of. This holiday season, I encourage everybody to go out and visit a Christmas tree farm. Better yet, go into the woods, get a permit, cut down a tree yourself. This is not the time to be supporting petroleum-based Christmas trees, but our own homegrown trees that support our economy and our culture.

CONGRATULATING SHARON PESUT ON HER RETIREMENT

Ms. PEREZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Sharon Pesut on her retirement as executive director at Partners in Careers, also known as PIC.

PIC is a nonprofit organization that connects jobseekers with workforce training and opportunities with local businesses and community members. PIC aims to assist low-income parents, domestic violence survivors, homeless veterans, and others get a second chance at a career.

PIC has been a huge asset to our local Ukrainian community, helping refugees and immigrants secure job opportunities.

Sharon has led PIC for 13 years where she has helped to expand youth and veteran programs throughout her community. Recently, Sharon, along with her partners at PIC, were honored as the Community Partner of the Year at the Washington Workforce Association Conference.

I thank Sharon for all of the work she has done for our community. I wish her all the very best in her retirement.

RECOGNIZING TERENCE "BOO BOO" RATCHFORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. NORMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a person who was born with disabilities, but no one ever told him. His photo exemplifies what this man represents.

His name was Terence Ratchford, they called him "Boo Boo," and he passed away on July 26, 2024. I rise to recognize his years of incredible dedication and exemplary work for the Fifth District of South Carolina.

Terence was raised in Gaffney, South Carolina, by his parents, Ruby Hemphill and Warren Ratchford, who was a star running back for Clemson University years ago.

Boo Boo always felt a deep connection with his community. He began volunteering his time at a young age

and was known to be willing to help whenever, wherever.

As a child, he attended Limestone Missionary Baptist Church and later joined the Greater Hope Ministries. He loved his church, his church family, and he displayed a deep commitment to serving it very well. He was a leader in religious programs, the choir, and Bible studies. His impact on the churches he attended will last for generations to come.

As an active member of his community, Boo Boo volunteered his time at many chamber events, community service projects, and at the Gaffney Hospital. He served at the Peach Festival and played a large role ensuring that the great city of Gaffney was celebrated each and every year.

Boo Boo coached football at Gaffney High School for over 20 years. He was referred to as the "Get Back Coach" because when the coaches got too hot and were pressing the line and getting on the referees, he stepped in and said to get back. He was beloved by coaches and players alike.

He also volunteered for the Blacksburg Middle School girls' basketball team and sponsored a wrestling event for the middle school.

Boo Boo wore many different hats. He was a God-fearing man, a leader, a friend, a son, and a coach. He served in each of these roles with kindness and with joy.

He will be deeply missed. During his funeral services—I have been to a lot of them—but I have never been to a gymnasium, in which the service had to be held, because of all the friends and people who just respected him came.

Please join me in expressing my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the life of Terence "Boo Boo" Ratchford.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

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

Ms. WEXTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to share my gratitude for this remarkable opportunity to serve my community. As I prepare to retire from Congress, I have been reflecting on what brought me here.

Despite growing up just outside of D.C., I was very much not one of those people who envisioned themselves in elected office since grade school, but I did want to help people. That is why I chose to be a lawyer.

I was very fulfilled doing that work, especially the opportunities to serve as a prosecutor, and later, a guardian ad litem for abused and neglected children and a substitute judge.

Then, one day in late 2008, I went just around the corner from my law office to Ida Lee Park in Leesburg to hear a skinny guy with a funny name talk about his message of hope and change and: "Yes, We Can."

Hearing then-Senator Obama speak was the first time that I stopped thinking that can't be me and started thinking, yes, I can. I believed him when he