

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

said that we could come together around what unites us as Americans and do the hard work of making life better for our neighbors.

So my political career began. In 2014, I won a State senate special election and went to Richmond as a bright-eyed, new legislator at a time when the legislature still didn't have a whole lot of people like me there. I was one of just a few women with school-aged kids, and I served in the minority.

I learned quickly that my best ideas for policy come from my constituents. I heard a woman's tragic story of losing her brother to an overdose and took action to make Narcan more accessible.

I worked with a mom to help pass a law that gave greater benefits to single parents of kids with disabilities. Another constituent came to me about her horrific sexual assault story, so I wrote a law empowering victims of revenge porn to file lawsuits and recover damages from their perpetrators.

Then, in 2016, another unlikely candidate for President led me to make a career change I never could have imagined. Once again, though, it was the hope that I could help people that led me to run for Congress.

I wanted to stand up for communities who did not feel represented. I stood with our Muslim neighbors at Dulles Airport to protest the Muslim ban. I became the first Member of Congress to hang a transgender rights flag outside of my office.

As the child of two parents who had worked for the Federal Government, I became a vocal advocate for the integrity of our civil service.

Most of all, I ran for Congress because of my kids. I went to Washington with the goal of making sure the stories of Virginia's families were heard, and that their Representative was fighting for their needs.

I am proud of what I was able to do, like working on legislation to invest in childhood cancer research in honor of a young constituent, Gabriella Miller, and her courageous battle and advocacy; supporting survivors of domestic violence and abuse; expanding mental health resources for Capitol Police in the wake of January 6; and standing up for human rights of Uyghurs in China.

It has been quite the unprecedented 6 years in Congress: Facing the longest government shutdown in history; not one, but two impeachments; a pandemic; an insurrection; and in the midst of it all, I began facing the greatest challenge of them all, my battle with PSP.

One of the first questions I asked my doctor after my diagnosis was if I could still run for reelection. His response was: Why would you want to? It was a very serious and sobering moment, but in truth, I had plenty of answers for him.

Above all, I did and still very much do believe in the possibility to bring hope and make change in the lives of those we serve here. As I battled this

disease, which robbed me of my ability to move and speak, I wanted to make the most of my platform to bring some good out of this terrible situation.

As I mentioned, my best ideas for legislation often come from personal stories constituents share with me. Now, it was my own struggle that I hoped to help turn into meaningful change in policy.

One of my proudest moments in Congress has been successfully helping lead the bipartisan National Plan to End Parkinson's Act to become law, the most consequential legislation ever passed to tackle Parkinson's and related conditions like my PSP. It will go a long way toward improving and saving lives.

This has been a journey, which has been so challenging, yet one which I am proud to have stood strong in and done my part to give hope and comfort to others facing similar battles.

Our disabilities and our health struggles do not define who we are, and I feel more strongly than ever that it is so important to share that truth with the world. This journey could not have been possible without so many people who share my belief that I could make a positive change and conviction that there is real good to be done through public service.

I thank my family, Team Wexton, and all of the people of Virginia-10. I hope I have made you proud. As I head into my final days in Congress, I am choosing once again to have hope.

People didn't lose hope in me after my diagnosis. I have real hope that one day we will find a cure for PSP. I see reasons for hope every day, especially young people, women and girls, and others who don't traditionally have a seat at the tables of power who are discovering and believing in the power of public service, just like I did all those years ago at Ida Lee Park.

I hope that the most impactful legacy I can leave is in the power of perseverance and persistence, in the belief that change is possible through public service, and that change is coming if we are willing to work for it.

CONGRATULATING STEFANIE SMALLHOUSE

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

Mr. CISCOMANI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Stefanie Smallhouse on her outstanding tenure as President of the Arizona Farm Bureau.

Since the day she took office 7 years ago, Stefanie has dedicated herself to fighting for the interests of our farmers and ranchers to make sure Arizona's vibrant agricultural community continues to thrive.

Her dedication, passion, and tireless work ethic set a standard of excellence and will continue to positively impact our agriculture community long into the future.

Stefanie's tenure not only strengthened the Arizona Farm Bureau, but it also empowered our farmers and ranchers to ensure they have a seat at the table when they are addressing critical issues, like water management and sustainability efforts.

In my time in Congress, I am deeply proud of the strong partnership and friendship that we were able to forge to promote the interests of Arizona's farmers and ranchers at the Federal level. Stefanie's role on my advisory council played a key role in my work for ag and farming communities.

While her leadership will be dearly missed, her legacy will have a lasting impact on Arizona's agriculture. On behalf of Arizona's farmers, ranchers, and the people of our great State, I thank her for her service, her leadership, and her tireless advocacy.

I wish her all the best in her future endeavors and look forward to seeing the positive impact she will continue to have in our community.

HONORING SHERIFF MARK LAMB

Mr. CISCOMANI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the outstanding tenure of Mark Lamb as sheriff of Pinal County.

Sheriff Lamb first started his law enforcement career with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community where he rose to the rank of detective of the gang enforcement agency.

He later joined the Pinal County Sheriff's Office where he distinguished himself as a capable and tireless officer, dedicated to keeping his community safe. In 2017, he was elected as sheriff of Pinal County and became instrumental in the fight against drug cartels, human smugglers, coyotes, traffickers, and other bad actors trying to take advantage of the situation.

While Sheriff Lamb's leadership and service will be deeply missed in Pinal County, Mark will continue to serve our country.

Laura and I wish him all the best in his new role. I look forward to continuing to work with him to secure our border and keep communities in southern Arizona and across the United States safe.

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CONGRATULATING ART DEL CUETO

Mr. CISCOMANI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my good friend, Art Del Cueto, for an outstanding career as a Border Patrol agent.

Art is a tireless public servant who dedicated his career to the safety and security of our Nation, approaching his work with a steadfast resolve and a genuine passion.

In the last 4 years, as the Border Patrol encountered its most chaotic period, Art exemplified integrity and commitment, earning the respect and admiration of his colleagues, lawmakers, and Americans across our great country.

Art will continue his work as part of the National Border Patrol Council