

Thank you for your attention to this appointment.

Sincerely,

HAKEEM JEFFRIES,
Democratic Leader.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

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

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I have had the honor and the privilege to represent the northeast San Fernando Valley for 28 years as a State assemblyman, as a city council member, and as a United States Congress Member.

I grew up in a neighborhood where I was told far too often: You are never going to amount to anything. You want to go to college? Don't even try it. Kids like you from your neighborhood never amount to anything.

I heard that countless, countless times, too many times from too many people, but I am here to remind anybody and everybody who has ever experienced that kind of negativity, those kinds of lies, that that is just not true.

I am very proud to say that I grew up in a community of hardworking people, a community that most of the families or most of the children are raised by immigrants in my community, just like me. I was raised by immigrants from Mexico, Andres and Maria Cárdenas, who came to this country not for themselves but for future generations to have a better life, a better life than they were afforded in their hometown of Temastian, Jalisco, Mexico.

I thank the many, many people who have been a positive influence in my life and who have given me support in many different ways.

I first thank the voters of my district who voted to elect me in 1996 to be the first person of color, the first Latino, to ever represent San Fernando Valley in any of our capitals. They elected me to be the State assemblyman for a community that was over 80 percent minority people. In a community where we never had a person of color represent us, they elected me to be the first one.

It was an honor that I didn't take lightly. I took it very seriously. I made sure that my goal wasn't to be the first. My goal was to make sure that I wasn't the last. Again, I thank the voters of the San Fernando Valley who have given me this responsibility and opportunity by voting me into office for over the last 28 years.

I hope and pray that I have done well for all of my constituents. I have tried my best. I have always done my best. I have always listened to them. I have always taken in the issues and tried to interpret them the best that I could to make sure that all of their lives in the San Fernando Valley are better for it.

I thank my parents, Andres and Maria Cárdenas, and my ten brothers

and sisters, for being such positive role models for me, for teaching me how to be good, do good, and give back to our great country and our community.

God is good because God gave me ten older brothers and sisters and two parents who stayed together for 48 years until my father passed away, who gave me all the examples I needed, the example of stick to it, the example of making sure that when you have "ganas" "the will power," when you want to get something done, do it, and to always think positive, always be positive, always give to others.

They taught me faith. They taught me how to respect myself and my community. Those are the examples, not my college degrees. Those are the examples that have allowed me to be an effective legislator for the last 28 years, the core building blocks of what it means and what it takes to be the best that you can be, not perfect, but the best that one can be.

I thank the community leaders like teachers and counselors and people who passed through my life and put their arm on my shoulder and said: You can do this. You are good enough. They nurtured me and encouraged me to always do good, to always think positive, to always believe in myself.

Again, to those people who choose to say the opposite of that to young people like I was, to people who grow up in bad neighborhoods—whatever that means—to the sons and daughters of immigrants whose parents don't even speak English, who raised their children here to love this country, to respect this country, and to honor this country; to the people who don't believe in people like me, like the ones that have passed through my life and told me the lies that you can't do this and you can't do that, good always prevails over bad, always.

To young people who have to endure that: I have endured it myself. Don't believe those lies. Believe in yourself. You are better than those who put you down.

I thank the supporters in the community who have volunteered all across our district, who have always been there to help thy neighbors when we were able to get resources out in the community and we needed help in doing so. I thank those community volunteers.

To the supporters in the halls of city hall, in our State capitol, and here in our United States Capitol, I thank you for encouraging me to be myself and to do the best job that I can for our country and for all people.

I have been very blessed to have amazing staff in all of my years in office, 28 years, dozens and dozens of amazing, wonderful people who have a heart for public service, people who put their heart and soul into everything that they do for the people. They are smart, talented, and caring people who have served our community and our country with distinction and honor.

To all of my staff, I thank them for serving. I see them as family and my family sees them as family as well.

I also thank my mother-in-law—yes, my mother-in-law. She loves me like a son. My mother-in-law, who came here as a young immigrant, Elvira Delgado Wagner, and my father-in-law, Jesus Luis Sanchez, and my brothers-in-law, Louie and Robert, to my many brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and my over 40 nieces and nephews: Without you, our family, my family, my wife, Norma, and our children may not have been able to do this for this long.

I thank all of them for being part of the support system that any and every elected official needs to do this job of public service.

I am eternally grateful to my wife, Norma, and our children, Vanessa, Cristian, Andres, and Alina. You have been so supportive and understanding for the past 28 years, to have that weird life of seeing your father go away for 3 or 4 days at a time to the State capitol, to the United States Capitol, being involved in community meetings and community events, yes, even during your birthdays and our anniversaries. I thank them so much for their understanding and their support and their patience.

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I also thank my son-in-law Brian De La Rosa and also our two beautiful grandchildren, Joaquin and Jimena. How blessed I am to be a husband, a father, a grandfather, to have so many beautiful family members that I can count on that have always supported me in a loving, beautiful way.

Next to me is a picture of my wife, Norma, about the time that I met her. You might say, wow, I know why he fell in love with her. The beauty that my wife, Norma, exudes is nowhere near as beautiful as what she has inside. She is so understanding, so supportive, so tolerant of me. We have been married for 32 years, and I am grateful for every day.

Being an elected official is a difficult job. I would say for family members of full-time elected officials like us, Members of Congress, being a family member of an elected official is harder. As elected officials people praise us more than they should perhaps. People laugh at our jokes. People tell us nice things, but our family members don't necessarily receive that praise or that acknowledgment. I am not just speaking for myself; I think I speak for all of us who are elected, who do our job willingly, who do our job as it is supposed to be done with 100 percent of effort.

Let me tell you, you will never hear an elected official say that their family comes first. I have said it, and I mean it. However, when you actually consider who sacrifices the most not having their father, their mother with them, their brother, their sister, their husband, their wife, who is the elected official, what the family endures, I believe, is more.

I have been blessed, blessed to be elected in a community that did not see themselves in their elected officials. Today, more of us do in the northeast San Fernando Valley.

When I got elected in 1996, one of my core missions was to break that glass ceiling; to be the first person of that community and from that community who went to those public schools, who tripped on those broken sidewalks, who drove over those potholes and felt forgotten, to get elected to office and to fill those potholes and fix those cracks and make those schools better and build new schools. Those are the things that I have been able to help achieve for our community over the last 28 years.

I made it my personal mission that wherever I went I would identify with good people who wanted to be good public servants and help them get elected starting with my own community. I helped a young man, an amazing young man, ALEX. I met him when he was 21 years old. Somebody was telling me, TONY, you need to run for the State assembly. I asked ALEX, If I run for the State assembly, will you run my campaign? I didn't know anything about campaigns. He said, Neither do I, but let's do this.

When I decided to run, I made him my campaign manager. He had never run a campaign before in his life. The district was 450,000 people. It was not an easy task, but we took it on as two people who grew up in Pacoima, two kids who were both told by the same math teacher 10 years apart from one another that they couldn't cut it.

When I told my math teacher that I got accepted to the University of California, Santa Barbara to be an electrical engineering student, he laughed in my face, and he told me, You can't cut it. Don't even try it. They will eat you alive. Try community college, maybe you can handle that.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years later when ALEX PADILLA got selected to go to MIT, the number one engineering university in the world, that same math teacher told him, You can't cut it. That young man, ALEX PADILLA, got elected to the L.A. City Council, became the first Latino council president of the city of Los Angeles and the youngest council president in the history of Los Angeles.

He later went on to be our State senator for our community, and served two terms. Then he went on to be the secretary of State, the first Latino secretary of State in California history and served his two terms there.

One day he got the call from our Governor of California and was asked: Will you accept my appointment to be our United States Senator for California to fill the vacancy that KAMALA HARRIS left when she became our first woman Vice President of the United States? With tears in his eyes, he said, Yes.

The reason why ALEX PADILLA was brought to tears was because when the Governor asked him if he would take

on that responsibility, if he would accept that responsibility, I said, Mama Padilla—which is what I called ALEX's mother—I said, What would your mother think of you becoming a United States Senator? He thought about the sacrifices that his mother made who cleaned homes for a living, the career that his father had being a short order cook to raise their three children, and he said, Yes, I accept.

He has since been elected to the U.S. Senate twice. I am so proud of him, the young man who grew up just a couple of blocks away from me, who endured the same lies that I had to endure from teachers and others who didn't believe in him and didn't believe in me. Unfortunately, too many of those people don't believe in many of us. They don't believe enough of us to think that we can do what we have been elected to do, to be community leaders, to be national leaders, to make decisions that affect every American citizen and beyond.

Every time I have been termed out of office or every time I have chosen, like this time, to no longer run for that position, State assembly, city council, and now in Congress as I retire from Congress, I have always chosen someone to consider running in my former position. Every single time, it has been a woman, a Latina, who grew up in the same community that I grew up and that ALEX PADILLA grew up in, and on every occasion they have done a much better job than I. I am proud of that track record.

To be a true public servant, one has to realize it is not about me, it is about we. It is about the community, uplifting the community, bringing out the best in one's self and each other, bringing out the best in our community.

When I met my wife, Norma, she looked like the first picture, and she is more beautiful today. I can't take credit for raising our four beautiful children. She can. She says, No, no, no, it wasn't me. Yes, it was. Yes, it was. She takes care of the family when I am away too much, making sure that when our children cried there was a shoulder to cry on, making sure that when it was time to take them to the hospital or to the doctor, she did that, not me. She gave me the space to be the best Representative that I can be, and she shouldered the burden of being the mother to our children and filling in the gaps when I couldn't be there.

In this picture, as you can see, she is wearing a cap and gown. While doing all that, she actually went to school, and she achieved her goals in many areas. She has run her own business, many times sacrificing her own business to make sure that she didn't leave the family out or that she made sure that she was there for them when I couldn't be there.

Oftentimes when we think of the people who are closest to us we take it for granted how much they support us, how much they give of themselves, how much they give to others. I just wanted

to make sure that before I leave Congress, before I no longer can express what I feel I need to express on the House floor in these Chambers—because when I am no longer a Member of Congress, I am not allowed to come and speak from the podium, to speak from that microphone. Only current Members of Congress are allowed to do that, as it should be.

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to say thank you to so many people, to say thank you to my family members, to say thank you to my staff, to say thank you to the people who cared for me and loved me enough to teach me and mentor me to help me be the person that I am today.

I never cared to be the best. I always made sure that I focused on doing the best that I can achieve, to do the best job that I can.

I feel good about my career. People remind me now and then, they say remember when you did this and remember when you did that, and many times I actually put it so far back in my mind that I am like, wow, I did do that, didn't I? We did achieve that.

I hope that what I do in the future can give me the satisfaction of knowing the difference that we were able to make in these Chambers, in city hall, in our State capital, but I feel confident that I am going to be happy because God has blessed me with beautiful children, beautiful grandchildren, amazing family members, and the most beautiful woman I have ever met, the most beautiful woman in the world, my wife, Norma.

I hope that she can put up with me being around more often. When I hear from my friends who have retired once in a while they hear from their wives when they retire or their partner, Don't you have somewhere to be? I can understand if my wife, Norma, says that to me. I hope she doesn't, but if she does, I can understand. She comments sometimes that being married to an engineer can be difficult. I know. I know what she means.

Again, I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you to all the people who choose the life of being an elected official. I want to say thank you to all of the people in my life who have helped me become an elected official, to be an elected official for 28 years, staff, friends, family, voters, everyone. It has been an honor. It has been a privilege.

My interpretation of that is I think that I receive a lot of love from all of you. That is how I interpret it. I love you, too. Thank you for giving me this honor.

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

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FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LOPEZ) is recognized for 60