

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.

□ 1830

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

minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of the Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the House of Representatives, and my fellow Americans, lend me your ear.

“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Since 1776, the people of this great Nation have bestowed the responsibility of fulfilling that declaration and setting the course of the future of our Nation in the collective hands of Congress which is comprised of both Members of the House of Representatives and Members of the United States Senate.

Since that time, every Member willingly raises their hand and publicly makes that sacred pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, both foreign and domestic.

It is my belief that the American people look for the principles of respect, collaboration, friendship, unity, and statesmanship in every Member of Congress.

I encourage all Members of Congress to subscribe to and remember this quote from Henry Ford: “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

The issues our Nation faces today are not Republican or Democrat issues. They are people issues. One issue I have repeatedly highlighted during my time here has been our national debt and the broken way in which Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, continue to support reckless spending.

Spending the people’s money irresponsibly has created a \$36 trillion national debt which grows by \$1 trillion every 100 days. A \$1 trillion national debt equates to \$107,594 per person, \$272,546 per household, and \$493,233 per child.

Quite frankly, it is an embarrassment, and it needs to stop. Something must be done.

I join the millions of Americans who pray that on January 20, the President in the 119th Congress will seriously focus on the budget crisis and make the right decisions to remove this heavy burden off the backs of hard-working people of this great Nation and the backs of our children.

I thank my good friend, JODEY ARRINGTON, chairman of the Budget Committee, and my friends on the Committee for sounding the alarm and for their efforts to help right this ship.

Mr. Speaker, this evening I rise for the last time in this hallowed Chamber to bid my farewell. Even though my time here pales in comparison to the joy I find in family and faith, I proudly say that being among all of you has been more than an honor. It has been a privilege.

Yes, this place has its problems, but it has so much worth celebrating. I made friends across the aisle and have gotten to know a few of you through the early morning congressional football practices or prayer groups.

I have been blessed to know and learn from intelligent, loyal, and long-suffering staff that guided me through my journey. I have spoken on the House floor about issues that matter to the people of Colorado’s Fourth Congressional District, also known as the eastern plains of Colorado.

On January 2, my 6-month term as a sitting Member of Congress will come to an end. In just 6 months, my staff in D.C. and I have: Passed H.R. 9714 out of the Budget Committee, introduced a commonsense red card bill that would allow immigrant workers to remain in our labor force, introduced legislation that would place the national debt on every Federal voting ballot, highlighted and advocated for important local issues, presided over the House floor, played in the congressional football game, and drew national attention to the dangerous Tren de Aragua apartment takeover in Aurora, Colorado.

I joined the DOGE Caucus and worked as a constructive Member of the Republican caucus to support commonsense legislation that will help families in Colorado.

From July 21 to December 15, 147 days, my district staff back in Colorado have closed 401 cases, had 58 walk-in appointments, referred 1,116 constituent calls for further help, helped 21 constituents with grant requests, and helped return \$564,760 back to constituents with \$3,914,000 yet to be deposited into individual accounts for a total of \$4,478,760 or, better yet, \$30,468 a day.

I recommended 52 individuals to the military academies. They assisted me in traveling to all 21 counties of the Fourth Congressional District at least twice within the last 5 months.

Arriving in Congress wasn’t a high point, and leaving isn’t a low point either. It is life. You see, I describe my short time in Congress as that of a foreign exchange student. I arrived in July during the middle of the year. I missed the yearbook pictures. No one knew me. So both sides of the aisle liked me. I will not be coming back next year.

As a veteran, I describe my time here as a TDY, better known as a temporary duty assignment. Now it is time to return home.

Mr. Speaker, I treasure, Lisa, my wife, my children, Michael and Christina, my service in the Air Force, and my Lord more than any amount of time in Congress. I am proud to define my life by service to my Lord, my family, the Armed Forces, and now to the people of Colorado’s Fourth Congressional District.

To my wife, Lisa, I thank her for joining me in this unexpected and unbelievable opportunity of serving in Congress. Having her by my side every day here in D.C., along with her support, encouragement, and love, has made the hours in travel, the early mornings in briefings, the afternoons in meetings, the evenings with receptions, studying memos, and racing to late-night votes made it both productive and bearable.

Lisa is my soulmate and my rock. I love her more than she will ever know.

To my son, Michael, and my daughter, Christina, I love them both. I hope that I have made them both proud.

One day I hope to bring my grandkids here. We will fly into Reagan airport and fight through the afternoon traffic. I will point out the never-ending construction on Cannon and lead the little ones to Statuary Hall before walking through the tunnels and eventually heading up to Rayburn’s fourth floor where my office was.

I will hold them close there and say that their granddaddy was a part of this. I will say that government for and by the people isn’t an abstraction. It is in their bloodline. I speak of generations because that is what the government is for, to protect, preserve, and pass along a legacy for our children.

At the end of my oath of office, I bound myself to my pledge by saying, “So help me God.” He has indeed helped me the same way that he has shepherded and guided this still-young Nation.

As I prepare to depart, I am reminded of my parents, Gregorio and Victoria Lopez. They taught me the value of hard work, laboring in the fields under the Texas Sun. When the day was over, the foreman would come out and yell, “Ya Vamenos. Ya cavamos de trabajar,” which translated means, “Let’s go. Our work is done,” then my parents would finish up and head home.

Colorado is calling me home, and I must answer. My work here is done. I now depart.

With immense gratitude to God, my family, Colorado’s Fourth Congressional District, the friends I have made here, my staff, and this institution, I bid them all a fond farewell.

In my story, this is just a chapter, and every chapter ends. That is for the best because we can see what happens next.

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

□ 1845

ISSUES OF DEBT AND DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 30 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, we learned late this afternoon that the Republican leadership of this House has derailed the important appropriation bills to fund the Government of the United States for the fiscal year that actually began October 1.

It has been delayed for months and months, and now, today, with legislation ready to move, again, the Republican leadership has failed the people of the United States.

Why did they do this? The incoming administration, which has not been sworn in yet, called and asked them to shelve the funding of the Government of the United States for the fiscal year of 2025, which, as I said, began on October 1.

Why did they do that? All the Members were here on both sides of the aisle. We were ready to vote. We had done the work.

I serve on the Appropriations Committee. We have worked for well over a year to put 12 bills together that should have been presented to the Chamber one at a time starting back last June.

They say they want to talk. They want to talk with Congress about the debt ceiling. Surely, this is a joke.

Here are the facts, and here is a great chart. Numbers don't lie.

President-elect Trump in his last term had tax cuts passed to millionaires and billionaires that have already added \$2 trillion to the over \$30-trillion U.S. debt. We are going to add up numbers tonight, simple numbers. So, \$2 trillion from the first term, and that adds up even more every year.

There is more to come, Mr. Speaker. The tax cuts provided by a predecessor of his, George Bush the second, have already added \$8 trillion to the U.S. debt. Those benefits went to, again, billionaires and millionaires, not to the middle class or working people, and there is more debt to come because those tax cuts haven't expired.

So, just with the past Trump administration and the two Bush tax cuts, we are talking about almost one-third of the accumulated debt of the country, and that number is right up here. It is \$36 trillion in U.S. debt.

It is interesting where it is coming from. Bush two's wars added another \$8 trillion as part of that \$36 trillion in military spending to the debt, but it wasn't paid for.

Just these three Republican gouges of the Federal purse total \$18 trillion of the \$30 trillion.

That is accumulated debt on the current generation and future generations, but it is not over. Republicans again cuddled up to Wall Street, causing the horrid recession of 2008. That cost a

minimum of \$3 trillion more of the \$36 trillion to bail out America where it could be bailed out. That recession was a total disaster.

The average African-American citizen of our country who owned a home lost one-half of their accumulated wealth because so many families lost their dwelling. About 30 percent of Hispanic Americans lost their homes. The rest of the country lost about 20 percent of their accumulated wealth. That was a horrible, horrible, horrible meltdown of the economy. Again, it added \$3 trillion to the accumulated debt.

Now, we hear one of the people on the phone to the leadership of this House, Elon Musk, who is the richest man in the world, is trying to strangle the U.S. Government, in other words, to not pass the appropriation bills to grow his monopoly power. He already has contracts with the Department of Defense and from NASA.

What is he interested in doing? Gaining even more control over the production of three things: electric vehicles, space-based communication, and commercial and military rockets.

How much is he going to add to the accumulated debt?

Mr. Speaker, this is not a pretty picture. The middle class and working people of this country have to stand up to these billionaires and millionaires strangling the U.S. Treasury and causing raids in the future on the accumulated wealth of the American people, particularly in our Social Security and Medicare accounts and the food and agricultural programs, which are being held up because this body is being held back by people who haven't been sworn in yet from doing its job.

Environmental cleanup? Forget about that. There is not going to be money for that and so many programs critical to the working people of the United States.

Numbers don't lie. Forget politics, Mr. Speaker. Just look at the raw figures.

We have a lot of accounting to do in this Chamber to the American people for the chaos attending those who hold the gavel, and they had better bring that bill to the floor tomorrow. The American people have been waiting for far too long. Frankly, they shouldn't be paid. If you can't bring the bill to the floor, then you shouldn't be paid.

I want to turn to another subject, and this regards the Army-Navy Football Game that was broadcast about 1 week ago.

For spectators watching the Army-Navy Football Game, the moments can be exhilarating. From either their seats in the stands or couches at home, spectators can enjoy the thrill of the game.

Meanwhile, the teams on the field put their grit and mettle to the test. The trials of the gridiron are often compared to the rigors demanded of our young soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians in uniform.

There may be similarities in teamwork, but believe me, ultimately, play-

ing football does not compare to the sacrifices demanded of our servicemembers in combat, including, for some, the last measure of full devotion.

Our Nation is protected by our military's patriots, whose motto is: We Are Your Defense.

The veterans in our family have fought for our Nation for over a century and a quarter. Most of them did not play football. All were hard workers dedicated to service and deep patriots of the United States of America.

Our Uncle Tony, who served in the Office of Strategic Services under Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell, remarked that service in his lifetime meant kill or be killed in the lethal China, Burma, and India theater as U.S. soldiers parachuted into those killing fields and ultimately built what is called the Burma Road.

Our father's oldest brother, Szepan, deployed into combat under Woodrow Wilson as a marine against the Bolsheviks' civil war after World War I. He was sent to northern Russia in the Arctic, where frigid, 40-degree-below-zero temperatures and remote conditions took their toll as marines deployed to Arkhangelsk and Vladivostok to fight the Bolsheviks. That ultimately resulted in a civil war.

The Red army was victorious, sadly, and almost all those who served in our family on both sides, both our mother's and our father's sides, had been combat veterans for this country going back a century and a quarter.

For my part, as a senior in high school, I dreamed of attending the United States Air Force Academy to serve my country, but in those days, my application was rejected because I was a woman. Thank goodness that has changed.

Despite this rejection, I maintain my interest in our national security by now serving as a senior member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, and that is another reason that the leadership of this House should not hold up the appropriation bills. The Defense funding for 2025 is in that bill. The work of Defense ensures our men and women in uniform are supplied with the resources required to protect American interests at home and abroad.

As I watched the publicity around the Army-Navy Game, I realized I could not recall any veterans in President Donald Trump's family. Could I possibly be correct? I began to consider how someone with no or few veterans in their family would think about selecting advisers on such weighty questions as defense, war, and peace.

We must hope that these appointees being considered will be outstanding intellects and experienced leaders. This is America's tradition as the greatest fighting force on Earth. Top leaders must have exemplified lives of integrity, a serious commitment to military service, a deep knowledge of history, command of contemporary world events, and a record of managing a very large, complex organization.