

Faith is at the very core of who we are as Americans. Every nation before us was based on either a shared ethnicity, a common language, or a unifying monarch. But the United States of America was the first nation in history founded on the belief that every human being has inherent value and natural rights granted to them not by any earthly government, but by an all-powerful God. In the words of our Declaration, we are “endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” based on “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” acknowledging our “reliance on the protection of divine Providence.”

Many of our Nation’s earliest settlers were people of faith, seeking a land in which they could freely practice their beliefs. The Puritans of New England, the Pennsylvania Quakers, and the Catholic founders of the Maryland Colony were all men and women who came to these shores in search of a haven for religious freedom. The Founding Fathers after them carried on that faithful torch by enshrining that freedom of religion in the very First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as “the free exercise thereof.” They knew that a nation founded on the belief in a higher power must encourage a faithful population.

When religious freedom is protected, communities thrive. Ample research shows that faith strengthens the family unit, promotes stable marriages, and discourages drug abuse and violence. Regular church attendance is linked to lifting young people in inner cities out of poverty, and faithful people tend to be happier and more satisfied in life.

The role of religious organizations in America is invaluable. An estimated 350,000 religious congregations operate schools, pregnancy resource centers, soup kitchens, drug addiction programs, homeless shelters, and adoption agencies throughout the Nation, with more than 2,600 of them in my state of Mississippi alone. These organizations selflessly care for their communities and deserve to be celebrated and uplifted for the work that they do.

Today, it is distressing that attacks against particular faith communities have become all too common. Individuals and charities alike have been forced to compromise their sincerely held beliefs to keep their jobs or participate in certain government programs. Worse, some Federal Agencies are promoting policies and regulations that make it harder for faith-based charities and social service organizations to care for the need.

It is a sad fact that, today, too many people of faith feel unsafe on their college campuses, in their workplaces, or where they worship as attacks against their communities rise. No religious American should be afraid to openly practice their faith in the land of the free. It is imperative that the American Government clearly state that such discriminatory actions and hate-

ful attacks are intolerable and that they must be met with speech that unwaveringly speaks the truth and calls out evil for what it is. Attacks against faith, against the freedom of conscience, undermine the very foundation of America.

In a 2023 Gallup Poll, nearly three out of four Americans said they practice some kind of religious faith. This rich, diverse religious heritage is to our credit and should be encouraged. This Faith Month, I join millions of Americans in honoring the right to worship freely and openly, with public displays and celebrations, unashamed to share in our common American heritage as a people of faith. In this manner, we reaffirm our commitment to the religious liberty principles of our founding.●

TRIBUTE TO DR. JOLENE KOESTER

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, on Thursday, April 4, the California State University, Northridge’s—CSUN—“Soraya” performing arts center honored the four-decade career of former CSUN president, Dr. Jolene Koester. I rise today to celebrate the tremendous contributions she has made to the California State University community and to California at large.

Dr. Jolene Koester was born in Plato, MN, as the eldest of five children. Dr. Koester was the daughter of an auto mechanic and a stay-at-home mom; both her parents had never finished high school. But even in a rural town where, as she says, girls “were never encouraged to consider a future outside of the home,” Dr. Koester dreamed bigger.

Early on, it was in the classroom where Dr. Koester found mentors, friends, and a passion for learning that would last her a lifetime. It is that same passion that carried her through her studies to earn a bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota, a master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Ph.D. in speech communication after returning home to Minnesota.

Despite hailing from a small, Midwest town that wouldn’t even fill half of the performing arts center she would one day help build, Dr. Koester set out on what would become a 40-year career with the California State University system.

After starting as an assistant professor at California State University, Sacramento, Dr. Koester quickly rose through the ranks, holding various positions in the academic affairs division before being appointed to serve as provost and vice president for academic affairs in 1993. In 2000, Dr. Koester was appointed to become the fourth president of CSUN, one of the largest campuses in the CSU system and the only public university in the San Fernando Valley.

Under her leadership as president, she helped expand CSUN’s student population by over 25 percent, increased

retention and graduation rates, and opened their brandnew, state-of-the-art 1,700-seat performing arts center.

After retiring as president of CSUN in 2011, Dr. Koester made her return to the CSU system in 2022, when she was appointed to serve as the interim chancellor of the entire CSU system, the second woman ever to lead the 23-university system.

On a personal note, as a proud San Fernando Valley-native, I have seen Dr. Koester’s genuine commitment to the San Fernando Valley. Appointed in the wake of the Northridge earthquake and following a decade of social and political unrest, Dr. Koester brought a vision and a resilience to campus that matched the hopes of our community. Her service and dedication to our community has made us proud.

Whether in a small town in Minnesota or at the largest 4-year public university system in the Nation, the guidance of one mentor or leader can change the trajectory of countless students’ lives. For tens of thousands of students in California, Dr. Jolene Koester has been that leader.

CSU Northridge, the CSU system, and the entire State of California will always be grateful for her contributions.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Stringer, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, without amendment:

S. Con. Res. 33. Concurrent resolution authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for the lying in honor of the remains of Ralph Puckett, Jr., the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient for acts performed during the Korean conflict.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4639. An act to amend section 2702 of title 18, United States Code, to prevent law enforcement and intelligence agencies from obtaining subscriber or customer records in exchange for anything of value, to address communications and records in the possession of intermediary internet service providers, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6323. An act to modify the availability of certain waiver authorities with respect to sanctions imposed with respect to the financial sector of Iran, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The message further announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 382. An act to take certain land in the State of Washington into trust for the benefit of the Puyallup Tribe of the Puyallup Reservation, and for other purposes.

The bill was subsequently signed by the Acting President pro tempore (Ms. CANTWELL).

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 6323. An act to modify the availability of certain waiver authorities with respect to sanctions imposed with respect to the financial sector of Iran, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, April 18, 2024, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bill:

S. 382. An act to take certain land in the State of Washington into trust for the benefit of the Puyallup Tribe of the Puyallup Reservation, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4109. A communication from the Chief of the Branch of Domestic Listing, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Threatened Species Status With Section 4(d) Rule for the Silverspot Butterfly" (RIN1018-BE98) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 16, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4110. A communication from the Chief of the Branch of Domestic Listing, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Endangered Florida Bonneted Bat" (RIN1018-BE10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 16, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4111. A communication from the Biologist of the Branch of Domestic Listing, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Enhancement of Survival and Incidental Take Permits" (RIN1018-BF99) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4112. A communication from the Manager of Delisting and Foreign Species, Fish

and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations Pertaining to Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants" (RIN1018-BF88) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4113. A communication from the Attorney Advisor, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp., Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Tariff of Tolls" (RIN2135-AA56) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4114. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Advanced Reactor Content of Application Project/Technology-Inclusive Content of Application Project Guidance" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4115. A communication from the Chair of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Congressional Budget Justification for fiscal year 2025 received in the Office of the President pro tempore; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4116. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Updated Residential Soil Lead Guidance for CERCLA Sites and RCRA Corrective Action Facilities"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4117. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program: Formula Grants for Planning. Program Guidance for States, Municipalities, and Air Pollution Control Agencies"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4118. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program: Formula Grants for Planning. Program Guidance for Federally Recognized Tribes, Tribal Consortia, and U.S. Territories"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4119. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Fiscal Year 2024 Allotments for the State Revolving Fund Provisions of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Base Program Funding"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4120. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Interim Guidance on the Destruction and Disposal of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances and Materials Containing Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances - Version 2 (2024)"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4121. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Guidance for Vessel Sewage No-Discharge Zone Applications (Clean Water Act Section

312(f))"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4122. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Guidance for Developing and Maintaining a Service Line Inventory"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4123. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Programs" (RIN0560-AI63) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4124. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Changes Related to Reserve Account Administration in Multi-Family Housing Direct Loan Programs" (RIN0560-AD23) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4125. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Section 538 Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program Change in Priority Projects Criteria" (RIN0560-AD31) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4126. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hazelnuts Grown in Oregon and Washington; Decreased Assessment Rate" (Docket No. AMS-SC-23-0034) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4127. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Voluntary Labeling of FSIS-Regulated Products With U.S.-Origin Claims" (RIN0560-AD87) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4128. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revision to Electric Program Operating Policies and Procedures" (RIN0560-AC64) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4129. A communication from the Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Staff, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation" (RIN0560-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4130. A communication from the General Counsel, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Risk-Weighting of High Volatility Commercial Real Estate Exposures"