

order; defeated, she left the store immediately, her cart still in the middle of the aisle.

The Bennington Price Chopper, and other grocery stores across Vermont and this country, host similar sad scenes every day. Grocery prices went up nearly 25% between the beginning of 2020 and mid-2023, including a 10% increase in the single year of 2022. The major increase in basic food prices is compounded by massive increases in prices for other necessities. Housing prices are stratospherically high; the median sale price of a house nationwide nearly doubled between Q4 2012 and Q4 2022, and median rents for one-bedroom apartments nationwide soared by more than 20% during the pandemic. Heating oil prices, moreover, have increased in Vermont by nearly 50% since January 2020. And families incur even more burdensome expenses; the cost of child care in Vermont and many other states takes up 20% or more of the median family income, and college tuition has risen to absurd heights in recent decades. For many people, it is too expensive simply to exist in this country. Consequently, recent surveys suggest that more than 77% of Americans are anxious about finances, 68% worry they will never afford retirement, and nearly 30% suffer negative mental health impacts due to financial concerns.

Overall, the recent sudden, meteoric rise in cost of living in America is unsustainable; it causes drastic, sweeping harms to nearly all segments of the population. It must be swiftly met with calculated, multifaceted action. Large corporations and overly wealthy individuals, powerful yet unelected, are among the most responsible for the crisis, so they must be held accountable. They must be forced to pay their employees a living wage according to new legislation that raises the minimum wage annually with inflation. Corporate taxes must be heightened, furthermore, and these revenues must go towards the construction of new housing developments with units for low- and middle-income families. The new supply will ease housing costs, the single biggest monthly expense for most families. High housing costs can be further alleviated with new legislation to prohibit the ownership of single-family homes by corporations and with increased property taxes on vacation homes and investment properties.

The insidious cost-of-living crisis poses a complex issue that can only be solved with a bold multi-pronged approach. Each aspect of the problem—from corporate greed to housing and everything in between—must be assertively addressed with legislation. These legislative acts, in addition to assuaging the situation by themselves, will beg the question: should wealthy corporations be allowed to enrich themselves by driving up individual costs, paying lousy wages to the working class, and generally assaulting the American Dream? When societal attitudes towards this question change, the cost-of-living crisis will be solved once and for all.

MAGDELINA SHORT, BELLOWS FREE ACADEMY
FAIRFAX, SOPHOMORE

When faced with the thought of a life lost to fentanyl overdose, many people think of an addict who never wanted help, a criminal, or a life that was not worthy regardless. The first thought that comes to my mind is my friend Grace Riley, whose life was taken by fentanyl on June 2, 2022 at age 21. Grace was hardworking, an athlete, a role model and a friend whose kindness shone in countless people's lives. If she had not been sold the singular fentanyl pill, which she thought was a Percocet, she would be taking college courses, making art, and working towards her goals of recovery so that she could be-

come an addiction counselor to help those in her place.

According to the CDC, drug overdose death rates involving fentanyl increased by 279% between 2016 and 2021. These dramatic increases will only heighten, unless more honest and empathetic education is provided around the dangers of fentanyl along with how to assist someone experiencing symptoms of an overdose. Within mine and many of my peers' education, the only information our school system has provided regarding addiction and overdose has been minimal and creates a stigmatized bias against those struggling with addiction. Along with this our current education has not provided information on what to do in an emergency overdose situation. Only being shown short clips of vulnerable addicts in health class or reading large statistics with no personal story not only dehumanizes the tragedy of a life lost to overdose, but encourages judgment. These methods of teaching can overlook the struggles students or their loved ones may face regarding substance abuse and overdose.

Education must begin including lessons on how to administer Naloxone to a person in an emergency overdose situation. Naloxone, more popularly known as Narcan, is a nasal spray which not only is easy to administer but according to CNN can reverse up to 93% of opioid overdoses. If students are taught how to administer Naloxone they're given the ability to save the life of a peer, family member, or even a stranger.

Impactful education must start with understanding the lives taken by fentanyl overdose and addiction. The lives of real humans who had their own struggles, lives, and possibilities to offer the world. One method that can be used when teaching students about the dangers of fentanyl is by sharing real stories of people whose lives were taken by the drug. Organizational psychologist Peg Neuhauser found that learning stemming from stories is remembered more accurately, and much longer, than learning derived from facts and figures. This is because stories like Grace's are ones that students could see themselves or people they love in. Seeing the humans behind large statistics at a more personal level creates more urgency around such a pressing issue.

Education without stigma is the necessary starting point to ending fentanyl overdose. If these educational practices are widely implemented many lives have the potential to be saved.

JACKSON WHEATON, NORTHFIELD MIDDLE HIGH
SCHOOL, FRESHMAN

All life is interconnected and Vermont is at the precipice of an environmental calamity: our fish are dying. Climate change in Vermont is significantly impacting our fish population in streams and waterways. With increased flooding and warmer temperatures, more and more damage is being done to our lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. Erratic weather patterns caused by climate change are making our fish habitats more unstable. As an avid fisherman, I am concerned about the health and future of Vermont's native and non-native fish species and believe the government should step in to save our food chain.

According to an interview conducted by WCAX News of multiple Vermont Wildlife Officials, the fluctuating weather is causing alewives to wash up. They concluded, "The non-native species are subject to seasonal fish kills because they can't handle the lake's [Lake Champlain] cold temperatures." Anecdotal, my great grandfather, James MacMartin, was a biologist for Vermont Fish and Wildlife during the 1950s and 1960s and conducted extensive studies of Vermont watersheds and fish species. He found our lakes

and streams to be extremely healthy. An annual report from Fish and Wildlife compared his research from the 1950s to the fish population in the 2000s. They surveyed 205 streams, the same 205 streams that my great grandfather surveyed to compare the changes since the 1950's. According to VTDigger, 50-60% of brook trout in Pond Brook have died.

While climate change is not an easy problem to solve, with regard to our declining fish population, my solution to protect the waterways and fish of Vermont is to include more stringent protection of catch and release. If Vermont employed more game wardens, there would be greater enforcement of fishing laws and protection of those bodies of water. The average brook trout stocking during the 1950's was 1,701,499 as compared to brook trout stocking in the 2000' which was 243,435. Each year Vermont Fish and Wildlife stocked 34,029 fewer brook trout over the 50 years. The reason for this is habit degradation and fragmentation. Another solution is more stringent protection of waterways, including no boats on certain ponds or lakes, to help curb the spreading of invasive species.

When one part of our ecosystem is out of balance, it affects the viability of all living things. Our delicate ecosystem ravaged by flooding and erratic weather patterns needs more protection now than ever before. All living things have a purpose, and it is time we take action to protect nature's most important resources.●

VERMONT STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY CONTEST JUDGES

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, since 2010, I have sponsored a State of the Union essay contest for Vermont high school students. This contest gives students in my State the opportunity to articulate what issues they would prioritize if they were President of the United States.

This is the contest's 14th year, and I would like to congratulate the seven volunteer judges who helped choose the contest winners and finalists. The contest relies on its committed team of judges. The judges take time to review each essay and evaluate the diversity in writing that engages students and will benefit them for years to come. The judges' willingness to participate in this project reflects their dedication to both the students and our State, and for that, I graciously thank them.

The judges include:

Andrew Chobanian of Oxbow High School—participant for 2 years

Lauren Conti of Stowe High School—participant for 2 years

Jason Gorczyk of Milton High School—participant for 11 years

Krista Huling of South Burlington High School—participant for 11 years

Mary Schell of White River Valley School—participant for 2 years

Sarah Soule of Middlebury Union High School—participant for 6 years

Terri Vest of Twinfield Union School & Vermont Virtual Learning Collaborative—participant for 14 years

I am very proud to enter the State of the Union Essay Contest judges into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to recognize their contributions.●

90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY OF TUPELO PURCHASING POWER FROM TVA

• Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, 90 years ago this month, Tupelo, MS, went electric. The city became the first to purchase power from the Tennessee Valley Authority—TVA—sparking nearly a century-long partnership. We celebrate that distinction with an iconic sign at the intersection of Gloster and Main streets, which dubs Tupelo the First T-V-A City.

In 1934, just 2 percent of rural Mississippi households were connected to electricity. Many Southern farming families had already lived in poverty before the Great Depression made their situation even worse. Congress created TVA to begin addressing these challenges. The TVA mission was to provide low-cost electricity, promote economic development, and reduce flood risk and damage.

Tupelo is a testament to TVA's success accomplishing that mission. As a resident of the First TVA City, I look back on February 1934 with gratitude. Electricity helped unleash the latent potential of rural Mississippi, and we continue to reap the rewards today.●

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. PETERS, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

S. 1258. A bill to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to submit to Congress an annual report on projects that are over budget and behind schedule, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-157).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Ms. SMITH, Mr. FETTERMAN, and Ms. ROSEN):

S. 3793. A bill to reauthorize the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. HEINRICH (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SCHATZ, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 3794. A bill to direct the Secretary of Labor to support the development of pre-apprenticeship programs in the building and construction trades that serve underrepresented populations, including individuals from low income and rural census tracts; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself and Mr. SULLIVAN):

S. 3795. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that the 50 percent limitation on the deduction for meal expenses does not apply to meals provided on certain fishing boats or at certain fish processing facilities; to the Committee on Finance.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. WELCH (for himself, Mr. KAIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. SMITH, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. KING):

S. Res. 554. A resolution calling for the urgent delivery of sufficient humanitarian aid to address the needs of civilians in Gaza; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina):

S. Res. 555. A resolution designating the week of February 10 through February 17, 2024, as "National Entrepreneurship Week" to recognize the importance and contributions of entrepreneurs and startups to the economic prosperity of the United States and the well-being of every community across the United States; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. Res. 556. A resolution to provide for the printing of the Senate Manual for the One Hundred Eighteenth Congress; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. Res. 557. A resolution authorizing the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate to conduct quarterly blood donation drives; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SCHMITT (for himself and Mr. HAWLEY):

S. Res. 558. A resolution congratulating the University of Missouri Tigers for winning the 2023 Cotton Bowl Classic; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 133

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 133, a bill to extend the National Alzheimer's Project.

S. 547

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 547, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

S. 644

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 644, a bill to expand the take-home prescribing of methadone through pharmacies.

S. 1332

At the request of Ms. HASSAN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1332, a bill to require the Office of Management and Budget to revise the Standard Occupational Classification system to establish a separate code for direct support professionals, and for other purposes.

S. 1514

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma

(Mr. MULLIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1514, a bill to amend the National Housing Act to establish a mortgage insurance program for first responders, and for other purposes.

S. 1631

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1631, a bill to enhance the authority granted to the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice with respect to unmanned aircraft systems and unmanned aircraft, and for other purposes.

S. 2643

At the request of Mr. LUJÁN, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2643, a bill to amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to modify eligibility for prevented planting insurance under certain drought conditions, and for other purposes.

S. 2937

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2937, a bill to increase the rate of duty applicable to certain ferrosilicon produced in the Russian Federation or the Republic of Belarus and to require a domestic production assessment before increasing rates of duty applicable to products of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus under the Suspending Normal Trade Relations with Russia and Belarus Act, and for other purposes.

S. 3629

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 3629, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to revise recidivist penalty provisions for child sexual exploitation offenses to uniformly account for prior military convictions, thereby ensuring parity among Federal, State, and military convictions, and for other purposes.

S. 3764

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3764, a bill to extend and authorize annual appropriations for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom through fiscal year 2026.

S. 3770

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3770, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize grants to support schools of nursing in increasing the number of nursing students and faculty and in program enhancement and infrastructure modernization, and for other purposes.

S. 3779

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor