

School graduate. That is the same as the Boston Celtics have in the NBA. The Los Angeles Lakers have 18 titles, as well.

Eighteen titles for a land-grant university in rural Connecticut defies any conventional wisdom about big, high-paying university programs. They just keep getting it done.

Coach Hurlley, who coaches the men's team, was rooting on Geno and the women as loudly as anyone. It is a great university sports program that brings everybody together. We are so proud of them, particularly in the Second Congressional District. I have the honor to represent the amazing university campus and stores and also Avery Point.

Well done, bravo, and kudos to all of them. Just watching them celebrate on the court last night was really so exciting for all of us from Connecticut and from all across the country where many of these players come from.

I was texting with the Governor of Minnesota, Tim Walz, which is the home of Paige Bueckers, and he was as happy as anyone in Connecticut to see her great victory.

HONORING WES WATKINS

(Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of my friend and colleague, the great Oklahoma Congressman, Wes Watkins.

Wes originally took office as a Member of Congress in 1976 after serving 2 years in the Oklahoma Senate. He succeeded former Speaker Carl Albert, who notably endorsed Wes after retiring.

However, Wes' legacy of service started long before he made his way to Washington. As a young boy, Wes was involved in 4-H and FFA while working several jobs to help support his family. He then graduated high school at the top of his class before attending Oklahoma State University. He earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural education and a master's degree in educational administration.

At Oklahoma State University, he served as the southeast district vice president for the Oklahoma FFA Association. He was so successful in that position that he would later be chosen to be the State president of the Oklahoma FFA Association. But he didn't stop there. He continued to prove himself to his peers and was also elected as the chair of the student senate.

Winning the student senate election would become a monumental moment for Wes because it was becoming quite clear to everyone that he had an ability to motivate and to lead his peers.

In a 2017 interview with the Oklahoma Historical Society, Wes reflected on the moment he won the student election. A friend asked him if he was going to run for office one day. This made Wes stop and think about a life

in public service. He thought to himself: What is your mission? What are you all about? What is your passion?

It is evident that these questions guided Wes through his time in Congress. He was a strong public leader who advocated for Oklahomans above all else.

He was raised during a difficult time, where many families were leaving Oklahoma in search of jobs and a chance for economic prosperity. Instead of following suit, he ran for office to change this and help the State. When he arrived in Washington in 1976, he came with a clear mission: Make life better for the neighbors.

Wes knew that in order to do this, he needed to work on financial policy, so he made his case to join the Banking Committee. Like everything else Wes did, he was so successful that his peers chose to elevate him to the House Appropriations Committee, one of the most important committees in the United States House.

Later, during his second stint in Congress, based on that same track record of success, he secured his spot on the Ways and Means Committee, not only the longest standing committee of the United States House, but the committee of jurisdiction over all tax policy. This made Wes the first Member of Congress to serve on both the Ways and Means Committee and the Appropriations Committee.

Wes ultimately knew that these committee assignments would give him the opportunity to provide access to capital to Oklahomans, and he was right. While Wes Watkins' legacy in Congress cannot be overstated, to Oklahomans, his kindness, generosity, and love for his community might be what we remember most.

Now remember, Mr. Speaker, Wes received his degree in agricultural education, and he was certainly an educator and a mentor to his very core. In his later years, he spent time counseling young people who sought his guidance. He would ask these young people the same questions that he had once asked himself: What is your mission? What are you all about? What is your passion?

Oklahomans will remember Wes Watkins as a dedicated public servant who fought hard to bring abundant opportunities and true prosperity to his neighbors. He never forgot his original mission of serving Oklahoma, and the work of his lifetime will continue to benefit the State for literally centuries to come.

One last thought: When his time in D.C. was done, Wes went straight back to Oklahoma.

□ 1230

HONORING JANE CONOLEY

(Mr. GARCÍA of California was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. GARCÍA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Presi-

dent Jane Close Conoley, of Cal State, Long Beach, for her exceptional leadership, friendship, and passion for her community.

After nearly 50 years in higher education, she will retire at the end of this academic year, leaving a lasting impact on the Long Beach community.

As the first woman to serve as president, she led Cal State, Long Beach through a period of incredible growth, including growing enrollment and fundraising over half a billion dollars for scholarships, academic programs, and campus improvements.

Now, under her leadership, Cal State, Long Beach earned recognition as a high-research institution and received the Seal of Excelencia for its work with Latino students.

Now, Cal State, Long Beach also receives more applications than almost any public university in the Cal State system and public universities, period, in the State of California. This is all thanks to her incredible leadership.

President Conoley prioritized building strong connections between the campus and community and addressing student needs, from housing to food insecurity. She has been a partner, a friend, a supporter, and someone who has built an incredible academic reputation and partnerships across the country.

As an educator myself, I have seen firsthand her dedication to student success and her efforts to strengthen the university's ties to the community.

As she prepares for retirement, I know I join the entire Long Beach community in thanking her for years of service to Cal State, Long Beach, its students, and the community.

DISASTROUS MAGANOMICS

Mr. GARCÍA of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call out Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and their disastrous MAGAnomics.

Last week, Donald Trump and his Cabinet of billionaires recklessly imposed the largest tariff tax hike in American history. Now, look at the markets just today. They are crashing.

Costs will now increase on all kinds of goods for the American family and people across this country. Working families can't afford to pay more for basic needs, for necessities. No one voted to pay for more expensive groceries, homes, cars, and household goods.

That is all Donald Trump has to offer.

Supply chains and small businesses are also right now being thrown into chaos, and hardworking people are going to lose their jobs.

Not only do we have this incredibly large tariff tax hike, but we also know that the stock market is in a free fall. Retirement accounts are being wiped out. We have lost trillions of dollars in the stock market in just a few weeks.

MAGAnomics hurts working people and gives huge tax breaks and giveaways to billionaires, to Elon Musk and all of their billionaire friends.

MAGAnomics is about more than just causing a recession. Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and House Republicans are trying to take away billions of dollars from Medicaid, which will threaten, as we know, care for millions of people. That means higher healthcare costs, with many losing coverage completely.

MAGAnomics is slashing employees and programs from the Federal Government. It is about destroying the social safety net and the programs which we rely on, such as medical research, the Department of Education, air safety, and so much more. They are attacking the foundations of our economy and the foundations of our lives and our families.

Republicans in Congress need to join us and say enough is enough.

End the chaos. End the incompetence. Put American families first. Let's stop and reject Donald Trump and Elon Musk, and let's reject MAGAnomics right now.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE WES WATKINS

(Mr. COLE of Oklahoma was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, this is a little bit unusual. I have comments on my friend Wes Watkins, as well.

I want to talk a little bit off the cuff about the man that my good friend and colleague FRANK LUCAS was talking about a few minutes ago.

Wes Watkins liked to think of himself as an ordinary man and a typical Oklahoman. I can assure everybody here he was neither ordinary nor typical. He was extraordinary.

Wes Watkins was born, as my friend Mr. LUCAS said, in very humble circumstances, yet he succeeded in every single thing he did over the course of his lifetime. He succeeded in college. He succeeded as a businessman. He was a family man, and he was extraordinarily successful at that. He was in the National Guard. Finally, he began a political career, first in the State senate and then in the Halls of this distinguished institution.

Wes Watkins served two different stints in Congress, but what my friend Mr. LUCAS didn't say was that he served the first seven terms as a Democrat. Then he went home to run for Governor. He is the only person I know of in Oklahoma history, maybe in American history, that ever carried his congressional district first as a Democrat, then as a Democrat running for Governor, and then as an independent seeking the governorship, and, finally, later as a Republican.

He was so impressive on the campaign trail in his second term that the person who won the election, former Governor Frank Keating of Oklahoma—who was actually my friend, my mentor, and my client at the time—was so impressed that he would come back from the campaign trail and say:

I love Wes Watkins. He is for everybody I am for. He is such a great guy.

As soon as Frank became Governor Keating, he offered Wes Watkins a cabinet position in his own administration. Wes was the only person ever turned down who had been a State senator for a cabinet spot because Democrats were so mad at him at the time. Frankly, he got the last laugh because, the very next year, he ran for his old congressional seat and won.

Republicans thought so much of him. I remember calling Newt Gingrich, who was the Speaker of this institution at the time. I was Wes' campaign consultant and a good friend of Speaker Gingrich. I said: He really wants to go on the Ways and Means Committee. Speaker Gingrich said: If he runs, he has got it. I will absolutely put him there.

Wes was one of the best Members of Congress. He was a pretty extraordinary guy.

I will tell you, of all the different candidates I have worked with and for over the years, nobody ever worked harder and longer. As a matter of fact, on one occasion, I remember getting a call at 5:30 in the morning—actually, on more than one occasion. I would also get calls late at night. I called his beloved wife, Lou, once and said: Lou, I am getting calls at 5:30 in the morning and 10 at night. She said: TOM, he keeps a list of people he can call before 8 in the morning and after 8 at night, and somehow you have gotten yourself on both those lists.

That is how hard he worked. That is how relentless he was.

While he changed political parties over the course of his lifetime, I can tell you he never changed his political principles. Quite frankly, he symbolized and propelled the transformation of Oklahoma from a Democratic State to a Republican State. I never met Democrats who didn't like him or Republicans who didn't like him. He was simply a revered individual.

I remember Wes Watkins with a great deal of fondness.

In the course of his life, there were three things he loved the most.

First was his family. When you think of his family, you always think of his wife, Lou. They were inseparable.

Then, he loved the State of Oklahoma, and he served it proudly, as well.

Finally, and I say this as an OU alumnus and a fierce Sooner, he was the proudest, most ferocious Oklahoma State graduate I ever met. He absolutely revered that institution and spent a lifetime working for it.

I know the people of Oklahoma will miss Wes Watkins. He was, in many ways, a favorite son of the State. He certainly distinguished himself in public service and in his devotion to the interests of the State.

I am going to miss Wes even more than that. I will miss him as a friend. I will miss him as a mentor. I will miss him as a role model. I will miss him first, foremost, and always as a great Oklahoman.

PROTECTING AND SERVING OUR FIREFIGHTERS

(Ms. ELFRETH of Maryland was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. ELFRETH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Mark Falkenhan, a Baltimore County volunteer firefighter and Secret Service agent who perished on the third floor of an apartment building in 2011.

I rise on behalf of Nathan Flynn, a Howard County firefighter who tragically died in the basement of a large house fire in 2018.

I rise on behalf of Frederick County firefighter Captain Josh Laird, who we lost in 2022 when he, too, fell through a floor and into a basement fire.

After each of these tragedies and tragedies just like them across this country, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH, produced a report examining what went wrong and, crucially, how to prevent these tragedies from occurring moving forward. Those reports went on to save untold lives.

In Mark's case, the NIOSH report spurred a new emphasis on identifying and communicating the presence of a basement upon first arrival.

In Nathan's case, the NIOSH report exposed how outdated practices in building ventilation and fire flow management were killing firefighters across the country, ushering in nationwide changes in fire ground operations.

In Josh's case, the NIOSH report was instructive in identifying and operating over a basement fire.

Maryland's fire community, like so many in our country, is small and well-connected. Each fatality is felt widely and personally.

Following a tragedy, it can be difficult without the proper technical resources to make accurate and objective recommendations and changes, which is why the NIOSH investigations and reports are so crucial.

These NIOSH reports are critical for firefighting communities in Maryland and around our country because they save lives. When released, crews across this country gather around kitchen tables and read the reports together.

In Maryland, our firefighters have told me that in those moments and for the first time they were able to walk through an incident guided by photographs, construction drawings, time-tables, graphs, and supporting scientific evidence and that recommendations from these reports can be revolutionary to how they fight fires and save lives.

NIOSH produces these reports through its Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program, which was already significantly understaffed, with only five investigators investigating these incidents across the Nation. At this staffing level, it would take up to 4 years to thoroughly research and release a report after each line-of-duty death.

That was until 2 months ago.