

Transgender girls are girls. Transgender women are women. If we truly want to protect girls and women, we must stand for inclusion, dignity, and respect, not division and exclusion.

This isn't just about a policy. It is about our values. It is about ensuring that every student feels safe, seen, and supported. That is how we protect our children. That is how we honor the spirit of Title IX.

Let's move forward with solutions that uplift and unite our schools, not tear them apart.

IN SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE IMPACTED BY  
CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 days, our Nation has watched with horror and sadness the harrowing scenes coming out of southern California, as these fires tore through homes, neighborhoods, and communities.

On behalf of my constituents who know the terror and trauma of wildfire all too well, I rise today in solidarity with our California and Los Angeles "ohana," "family," and I am outraged over the callous and heartless remarks that conditions should be applied to their aid.

Within days of our Maui fires, teams from CAL FIRE were by our side on the ground to help deliver relief and organize the cleanup.

In our hour of greatest need, they stood by us without expectation of any reward. They simply stepped up for their fellow Americans. They showed us in Hawaii aloha.

That is what we need to do as a nation, as one people. We help each other out in our times of need, regardless of where we come from, our beliefs, or how we vote. We as Members of Congress pledge to do this every single day when we convene for business: one nation, unconditionally, under God.

Now, in California's time of greatest need, the President-elect, the Speaker, and other colleagues here in the House want to impose policy conditions on Federal disaster aid.

□ 1045

Mr. Speaker, this will endanger innocent lives and delay the ability of our fellow Americans to rebuild and recover from this disaster.

Never before in our history has the Federal Government imposed conditions on disaster aid for its own citizens.

This is just more than unprecedented. To deny our fellow Americans the help they need after losing loved ones, their homes, and their businesses in their darkest hour because of political differences, it is not just cruel; it is immoral. It is un-American. It is not who we are as a country.

It is an affront to our most basic values, one that transcends any law or policy and lives at the core of our faith. We should do to others as we would do to us. We must love our neighbor.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me and our fellow Americans in

solidarity in delivering the aid that California desperately needs without political conditions.

In doing so, I urge my colleagues to do the right thing and stand up for our values as a Nation. Let us send the right message to the American people that their government of the people, by the people, and for the people will always stand by them unconditionally, no matter what.

ENDANGERED SPECIES IMPACT ON  
CALIFORNIA'S WATER SUPPLY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the Endangered Species Act. Indeed, it was designed back in the early seventies and passed with bipartisanship. It was signed by Richard Nixon to protect endangered species.

What we see with its implementation in my home State of California and many other areas around this country, especially in the West, is significant misinterpretation of it.

Indeed, it has been weaponized to stop many things that would be good for people, even for the environment. We are talking about forestry, forestry practices that would make our lands safer and less fire prone. We are talking about the water supply that would help valley farmers. It would help urban areas, and it certainly would help the situation in Los Angeles right now.

What I have depicted here is a brush clearing project that was just above Pacific Palisades and other areas in L.A. that they actually had underway for a while until a national monument was declared above an area called Altadena. It stopped the ability to keep clearing brush. With national monuments, you are not allowed to go in there and do anything because it has to be left pristine and preserved. That ties in with the endangered species as well.

We see the results. Instead of clearing this brush, we get results like this. This is happening right now in southern California, tragically, needlessly. We will continue to see this.

I have seen it in my district. I have lost 3½ of my small towns in my district in the last 6 years, including the Paradise fire which took 85 lives, 90 percent of the town, Greenville, Canyon Dam, and a smaller town called Doyle that was burned on the east side. Again, the Endangered Species Act being manipulated and weaponized against doing the work we need to do is partly at fault.

For example, when we talk about water in California, let's look at the delta smelt for a moment. The water supply we should be building in California is impeded because the water has to be shipped out to the Pacific Ocean, supposedly to help the delta smelt. The water increases have hap-

pened since 1992. The legislation here increased another 800,000 acre-feet per year. Then it is built up from there to, hopefully, or somehow help the delta smelt.

This is Shasta Dam in northern California which we are trying to get filled right now but is going to be less useful for people as more of this water is dumped out to the delta.

What does that mean for southern California? Well, for example, let's take a look at this. This is the Santa Ynez Reservoir which currently is empty, supposedly for rehab and some maintenance. This is what it is supposed to look like full. That is what it looks like right now. It seems people in southern California who are supposed to be in charge didn't even know it was empty. This holds approximately 40 acre-feet when it is full, which is 117 million gallons.

When full, the Shasta Dam here holds 4½ acre-feet. We have been discussing a raise of Shasta Dam. It would be easy to raise it 18 feet. That would cause about 630,000 more acre-feet to be available to be stored in California.

With that, can you imagine what 600,000 acre-feet could do to help? It could fill this in minutes with the amount of water going out to the Pacific Ocean. The Endangered Species Act is being used as a weapon against raising an existing dam that was built in the thirties there that would do that. They will find a species of the week to do that. In this case I believe it is a salamander.

Let's go back in time a little bit. You have probably heard of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Tellico Dam. That project was an idea that came about in the late sixties, and the construction was going to happen pretty soon after that. What they did is some biologists, I think from the University of Tennessee, were out on a hike and discovered, he thought, she thought, whoever it was, that there was something called a snail darter in the river there.

Starting in about 1973, or soon after the ESA was put in place, it was listed in 1975 as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, leading to a legal battle that took a long time and was finally settled. It went to the Supreme Court and was finally settled by legislation passed in Congress in 1979, which exempted the Tellico Dam from the ESA protections and allowed the giant project. It was going to make so much hydroelectric power, store water, and be available for agriculture and people. They actually got it done.

Instead, the biologists took this so-called snail darter and moved populations to other rivers in the area. The species was then reclassified downward from endangered to threatened in 1984. Finally, in 2022, it was removed from the list.

Interestingly, when we talk about the weaponization of ESA, a study that was just released revealed that the snail darter isn't an actual distinct

species but is actually just another population of one called the stargazing darter. This raises concern about a species' identification when really what it is being used for is a weapon.

This is what the snail darter actually looks like because it doesn't exist as its own.

This is what they are doing in southern California. I just showed you the picture of the fires. There is a project near Pacific Palisades that was going to remove some vulnerable power pole lines that were made of wood and some lower hanging wires and other equipment with some stronger, more fire-resistant ones. They started on the project, but they discovered a species of vetch which is grown as a crop in many other areas, as a cover crop or what have you. They discovered one called, I think, Braunton's milkvetch. We grow cow vetch all the time in other areas. I have another picture in another speech.

When placed side by side, they are the same picture. These are weaponized to stop a project that could have been helpful in keeping Pacific Palisades from burning due to downed power lines. It probably wouldn't have been the key piece, but that has certainly happened in plenty of other areas around the State where downed power lines, due to the wind or branches and stuff blowing into them, have caused several fires, including the Camp fire in Paradise I mentioned that killed 85 people, and started a fire called the Dixie fire which burned a million acres.

Frequently, we have in northern California what we call public safety power shutoffs where people just have their power shut off because the wind might blow hard enough to blow branches into power lines somewhere. We sit without power like a Third World country.

This all traces back to the inability to do the forestry management where I was talking about water storage and to have a water supply for southern California.

What it boils down to is we need the leadership like President Trump is going to provide and what Gavin Newsom has been stopping as far as helping us with water storage and helping us get the water to the farmers and urban areas as needed.

#### ADDRESSING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the concern that faces the United States Congress, one that it has avoided and neglected for more than 54 years.

Richard Nixon was the last President to enhance Social Security. That was in 1971. All of us are concerned on both sides of the aisle, but concern is no substitute for action. It is long overdue that Congress takes a vote on behalf of the American people.

Social Security is more than a pension program. I think the American public knows it and is getting aroused because there are 70 million Americans that are on Social Security and 10,000 baby boomers a day become eligible for Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, for example, in your district alone there are over 175,000 Social Security recipients. It is broken down into those who receive pensions, those who get spousal benefits, those who get widow benefits, children, and, of course, disabilities. More veterans rely on Social Security disability than they do on the VA.

It is not emphasized enough, but the other key thing is: Social Security is the best economic development program that there is in the country. Every district, on average, gets over \$200 million coming into that district on a monthly basis.

Where do they spend that money? Nobody gets wealthy on Social Security. That is for sure. That money goes right back into the economy. It becomes something that Congress hasn't adjusted since 1971. I think there are a few things everyone would acknowledge that have happened to the economy since 1971.

Certainly, Congress is neglecting its responsibility. We can point fingers every way, but the bottom line is Congress needs to act. Congress needs to vote.

President Trump has called for tax cuts for people on Social Security. I applaud him. We have had tax cuts in our proposal for the last decade. There has been no action on that.

The difference between what we are proposing and what President Trump is proposing is that we pay for ours because if it is not paid for, what ends up happening is the Social Security fund will be bankrupted. It is still the number one antipoverty program for the elderly and the number one antipoverty program for children.

This economic development piece is something, again, that all of us ought to be able to embrace. I will provide every Member of Congress with a card that will demonstrate how many recipients they have and how much money comes into their district on a monthly basis.

For us, meaning the United States Congress, we are the only body that can act. The President can't do it through executive order. The Supreme Court isn't going to take it up. Only the United States Congress can. Inaction means the fund will be cut. Unpaid action means the fund will be cut drastically.

Imagine there are more than 5 million people that get a below-poverty-level check from Social Security, having paid in all their lives. That was not the guarantee that they signed up for.

There are close to 35 million people in total. This is the only benefit they have, again, attesting to the great vision and leadership of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, knowing this is actually the

safety net of capitalism. This allows people to take risks because even if people were to fail, there is something there to catch them and help them and their families through this.

Congress has not acted since 1971. Some will say: No, no, wait a minute. Didn't Tip O'Neill? Yes, they did. It was primarily led by Senator Bob Dole, but Tip O'Neill got together with Ronald Reagan who was adamantly opposed to Social Security. Mr. Dole convinced him, no, this is the right thing to do.

What they did is they extended the solvency of Social Security to its current position. It is not as long as it should have been, but, nonetheless, it is an action that went in the right direction.

I know the Speaker to be a man of good will and integrity. I hope this is something that we can bring up and work on to get this done on behalf of the American people.

□ 1100

#### REPUBLICANS STAND WITH WOMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MEUSER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEUSER. Mr. Speaker, this past week, House Republicans passed the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act, which ensures that biological men cannot compete in women's and girls' sports. It makes sense to about 99 percent of America.

The idea that we even need a bill like this is disturbing in itself. Think about it. We are debating whether boys or men should compete against girls or women in athletics, all athletics.

When Title IX was enacted back in 1972, Mr. Speaker, it opened the doors for women and girls to have equal opportunities in sports. When Title IX was enacted back 1972, it opened the doors for women and girls to have equal opportunities in sports. It is worth repeating.

Before Title IX, women's sports were almost nonexistent, but since then, we have seen great progress. Women's sports have flourished, and we have seen amazing accomplishments in basketball, soccer, swimming, and so much more.

Athletes like Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese, Simone Biles, and Lindsey Vonn are now household names, inspiring young girls everywhere.

Yet we have been faced with a narrow but loud group of activists and media who think it is acceptable for a 6-foot-4-inch biological male to compete against an average-sized, yet athletic, woman in sports.

Let's be clear, it is not acceptable. Also, it is not acceptable to force women to share a locker room with a biological man, forcing them to shower and change together.

This is not an overstatement, Mr. Speaker. It is happening, and it is traumatizing to women and girls to have a