

Last week, I stood with President Biden at the Bourbon Street memorial. We reflected on the profound loss felt by our community and our Nation. In the quiet of St. Louis Cathedral, we lit candles and prayed for healing for the injured survivors, for the grieving families, and for a city shaken but not broken.

This was not just an attack on New Orleans; it was an assault on our shared humanity, our spirit of joy, and our enduring strength.

Let me be clear: New Orleans will never let these lives be forgotten. We will rise from this pain with unity, love, and resilience as we always do.

Mr. Speaker, may God continue to bless the victims, their families, the great city of New Orleans, the great State of Louisiana, and the great United States of America.

RECOGNIZING THE FIRST RESPONDERS OF MONTANA'S SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT COMBATING THE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

(Mr. DOWNING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOWNING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the first responders of Montana's Second Congressional District who are sacrificing time and treasure to combat the ongoing wildfires in southern California.

Firefighters from Columbus and Red Lodge are joining groups like the Billings Flying Service and other crews and individuals from across the State to help those in need.

I applaud the leadership of these groups, including Columbus Fire Rescue Chief Rich Cowger and Red Lodge Fire Rescue Chief Tom Kuntz for setting an example of service before self.

During my time as a combat search and rescue enlisted aviator in the U.S. Air Force, we had a motto: These things we do, that others may live.

Mr. Speaker, these men and women exemplify that motto, so I ask that you join me in praying for and honoring these brave Montanans who have traveled far and wide and put themselves in harm's way to protect the lives and property of their fellow Americans.

God bless and Godspeed to these heroes.

RECEIVING DISASTER AID SHOULD NOT BE CONDITIONAL

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, some House Republicans are threatening to withhold disaster aid to California unless certain unknown conditions are met. There is even talk about attaching disaster aid to an increase in the debt ceiling.

Mr. Speaker, this could be your State. Never in our Nation's history has the Federal Government placed such politically driven conditions on disaster aid to its own citizens. We can have good-faith debates about water policy and infrastructure deficiencies, and we should, but that is not what this is about.

This is a bad-faith effort to use California as a punching bag. This is about the promotion of half-truths, conspiracy theories, and outright lies, not to mention it is a way out for House Republicans.

They can't raise the debt ceiling on their own, so they want to tie that to disaster aid. It is unconscionable.

Mr. Speaker, I say to my Republican friends that it is unacceptable and downright shameful to use the suffering of Californians in need, or anyone in need, to solve your internal political disputes. Please stop playing games. Let's get the disaster aid to the people who need it, and let's do it now.

HONORING GERRI McDANIEL

(Mr. FRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a dear friend and dedicated public servant, Gerri McDaniel.

Gerri had a fierce determination to better her community not just with her words but with her actions, as well.

She was a resident of North Myrtle Beach for nearly 22 years, where she was active in her community, including the Horry County Republican Women's Club. She was a true pillar of the South Carolina conservative movement.

In 2016, Gerri worked for President Donald Trump, helping to secure a historic victory.

In 2020, she served as an elector to our electoral college, helping to assign our States' nine votes to President Donald Trump.

Gerri's personality was infectious. She was an incredibly hard worker, and she had the unique ability to inspire others to work diligently for the conservative cause.

Mr. Speaker, through all that she accomplished, one thing remained constant: her passion for improving the lives of South Carolina and our great country. Her conviction, her fearless leadership, and willingness to serve will no doubt leave a lasting legacy for all who knew her.

RECOGNIZING CHRISTOPHER BROOKS AS OHIO'S 13TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CHAMPION OF THE WEEK

(Mrs. SYKES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to recognize Christopher Brooks as

Ohio's 13th Congressional District champion of the week.

Christopher is a senior AP art student at Canton McKinley High School. This year, he was awarded a Gold Key, two Silver Keys, and an honorable mention in the regional scholastic art competition.

Christopher's beginnings in art started in kindergarten, where he used his creative skills to make unique constructions out of LEGO blocks. Fast-forward to high school, and he has taken his passion for art to the next level by creating beautiful color pencil works and oil paintings.

Christopher's work that earned him a Gold Key will now be considered for a national award.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Christopher on this fantastic accomplishment, and wish him good luck as he moves on to represent our region on the national stage. He is a shining example of why Ohio's 13th Congressional District is known as the birthplace of champions.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT HAS BEEN A SYMBOL OF FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, Governor Gavin Newsom's High-Speed Rail project has been a symbol of fiscal mismanagement, and now the Department of Government Efficiency here in D.C., known as DOGE, is stepping in to examine the situation, as well.

Originally projected to cost \$33 billion back in 2008, the price tag has now ballooned closer to \$130 billion.

Despite an initial completion date for 2020, now it is, at best, by about 2030, maybe even 2035. Zero passengers have ridden on it because it is not possible yet.

This boondoggle has already consumed \$6.8 billion in Federal funds of all U.S. taxpayers. Now they are asking for \$8 billion more, which is way short of \$130 billion.

DOGE's analysis paints a grim picture of a project spiraling out of control with no end in sight.

Governor Newsom keeps funneling California tax dollars into this never-ending pit, ignoring needs like critical water infrastructure which could be helping all of our State, including southern California, if we could raise Shasta Dam and gain 600,000 new acres.

We would have the ability to not be short-funded on the brush removal that needs to be happening in southern California, as well as the forestry management all over California. Instead of empty-handed promises by Governor Newsom, we need to have President Trump leading the way.

FIRES DON'T DISCRIMINATE

(Ms. LOFGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise as the chair of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation to urge that we focus our energy on standing with firefighters, businesses, and families impacted by the Los Angeles County fire, not politics.

I have been hearing unprecedented political attacks, lies, and threats of conditioning disaster aid, even while these fires rage. This is the largest urban fire in the history of the United States.

Our rule has always been disaster help without conditions.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to change our longstanding policy, remember, your constituents could be the next ones to be abandoned. As my California colleague Congresswoman YOUNG KIM said this week, "fires don't discriminate," and she is right.

In December, when disaster aid went to victims in Republican-led States, including North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Florida, Democrats overwhelmingly voted for that aid.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't discriminate then, and we must not discriminate now during Californians time of need.

DEFENDING THE CONSTITUTION AGAINST ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

(Mr. KENNEDY of Utah asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce myself as I undertake this awesome responsibility to serve the citizens of Utah's Third Congressional District.

My name is MIKE KENNEDY, and I am both a physician and an attorney.

As a doctor, I am a trained listener. As a lawyer, I am a trained advocate. As a legislator, I intend to honor the promises I made to my constituents when I asked for their votes: to take seriously the problems we confront, which include a porous border and a massive national debt. I will be a foe to those who would work to turn the people over to the government and a friend to those who will turn the government over to the people.

Our common oath, when we begin this service, is to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. It is a call to actively search for all that unites us in our common citizenship without fear or favor.

The vision of our Founders, that we be "one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," burns brightly in me and will be my daily touchstone as I do the work of the people.

Mr. Speaker, let us go forward with renewed energy to keep all that makes America the great country that we know it to be.

PRIDE AND GRATITUDE FOR THE BRAVERY AND DEDICATION OF OUR 911 FIRST RESPONDERS AND FIREFIGHTERS

(Mrs. TORRES of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. TORRES of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today filled with immense pride and gratitude for the incredible bravery and dedication of our 911 dispatchers, first responders, and firefighters across California.

These men and women, many of whom work around the clock, have been on the front lines fighting tirelessly to protect our homes and communities from devastating impact of the ongoing fires.

I am also deeply proud of the way our communities have come together. From local volunteers to neighbors checking on one another and organizations offering aid, California's spirit of unity and resilience shines brighter than ever.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to navigate these difficult times, I urge my colleagues to not play politics and ensure we provide the disaster relief aid that California deserves and needs now more than ever.

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REMEMBERING GOVERNOR KENNETH "BUDDY" MACKAY

(Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor a treasured Florida statesman, the Honorable Governor Kenneth "Buddy" MacKay.

Today, his hometown and family will celebrate this compassionate fighter who served 26 years in the State house and senate, Congress, as Florida's Lieutenant Governor, and briefly as Governor.

A righteous fighter for what he believed in, he fought the Cross Florida Barge Canal and defended a fellow University of Florida classmate from racist taunts.

When others of his generation saw an issue to exploit, Buddy remained steadfast to protect civil rights, reproductive freedoms, and our precious ecosystem. Political foes used his decency against him, but Buddy MacKay remained a man of principle. He was a proud liberal who never abandoned causes that helped the less fortunate, even if it cost him votes.

I came of age watching Buddy MacKay masterfully maneuver against powerful adversaries and work tirelessly behind the scenes to help people. Buddy MacKay embodied all the values of decency and honesty, and his public service legacy is a model we desperately need.

May his memory be for a blessing.

LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to say thank you to President Biden and his team for their relentless perseverance and leadership in securing a needed agreement between Israel and Hamas that includes the release of 33 hostages, who have endured unimaginable suffering.

This breakthrough is a testament to unwavering U.S. diplomacy and steadfast support for Israel and is a profound moment of relief and joy for loved ones who never gave up hope.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, this mission is not over. We must remain resolute, bringing every hostage home, delivering humanitarian relief where needed, ensuring Israel's security, and laying the foundation for lasting peace in the Middle East.

THE LEAST OF MY BRETHREN

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, during this week in Washington, I have heard certain cunning, power-hungry individuals invoke the name of Jesus to blasphemously whitewash their own awful transgressions against the Ten Commandments and the dehumanization of God's precious creatures.

I don't expect the coarse subjects of my concern will hear nor even comprehend the Biblical verse I wish to enter into the RECORD—Matthew 25:31–46. Some day may these prevaricators face a reckoning in which the Lord of all lords will judge: Truly I tell you, whatsoever you do for the least of my brethren, that you do unto me. So be it.

NO CONDITIONS ON AID

(Mr. LIEU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIEU. Mr. Speaker, less than 4 weeks ago, Congress passed the American Relief Act, which provided disaster aid to States such as Florida, South Carolina, and Oklahoma. Did Democrats demand conditions on this aid because it went to red States? No, because we are all Americans. We are all God's children.

Congress has never put conditions on disaster aid because when Mother Nature strikes, she doesn't ask for your party affiliation before she hurts you. The people who were hurt in the fires in southern California were parents, children, and grandchildren who lost their homes or lost their loved ones.

I am asking Republican Members of Congress to please stop using the pain and suffering of disaster victims for