

the ranks of past recipients such as Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

For decades, Patriarch Bartholomew has been a bridge builder between faiths and a global voice for environmental stewardship and human dignity. His visit is a moment of pride for Greek Orthodox Christians across America, including many of my constituents in New York's 17th District.

On behalf of this Congress, I extend a warm welcome and safe return home to His All-Holiness and offer gratitude for his life of service and his witness to faith, peace, and reconciliation.

RECOGNIZING FIREFIGHTER KENNY BECK

Mr. LAWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize firefighter Kenny Beck, who has retired after 25 years of dedicated service to the Lake Mohegan Fire District.

Kenny spent his entire career on shift three, beginning at headquarters and later serving at Station 2 in Jefferson Valley.

Over those years, he became known not just for his reliability on calls, but for the way he has mentored other firefighters, passing along lessons that will outlast his time in uniform.

Kenny was there for his community in its most difficult moments, including his service during the attacks of September 11. His commitment to helping others continues beyond the firehouse through his work with the My Brother Vinny organization, supporting veterans and families in need.

Kenny's retirement marks the end of a remarkable career that will leave an impact on the fire service for years to come.

ICE AND DHS LOST CREDIBILITY

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

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we begin Hispanic Heritage Month, I want to honor the millions of Latinos and Latinas who make this country strong. We celebrate our culture and sacrifices.

This year, it comes with urgency because we are under attack. Last week, the Department of Homeland Security attacked me on X, insisting they deport only criminals. If you walk the streets of my district, Mr. Speaker, you see the truth, and it looks nothing like their tweets.

Last Friday, in Franklin Park, a suburb in my district, Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez left his home like any other day. He was a restaurant worker, and he enjoyed cooking. He was a devoted father. He never came home. ICE agents stopped him, and within minutes of dropping his kids off at school, he was shot and killed in broad daylight that morning.

First, they said that he drove at officers. Videos show otherwise. Then, they said that he dragged an officer. We have yet to see the evidence. They said that the officer feared for his life,

but neighbors' videos capture gunshots and then a car coasting. Silverio was already incapacitated before crashing into a semitrailer.

Those same videos show officers, including the one supposedly seriously injured, smashing the window, dragging Silverio's lifeless body out, slamming him onto the pavement, and handcuffing him as he bled out.

Silverio didn't make it. DHS' story doesn't add up.

A man is dead. A family is shattered, and the agency responsible keeps hiding behind masked thugs and unmarked cars. I use that term because that is how so many agents are acting, either voluntarily or not.

ICE and DHS have no credibility, and neither do their stories. They have lost it.

□ 1010

Reports indicate that officers involved were not wearing body cameras. This is not law enforcement. This is becoming an American gestapo.

Silverio's tragedy is not alone. It affects families every day now. That same day, in Little Village, ICE arrested William Gimenez, a day laborer, as he walked into a barber shop with his wife. William was a lead plaintiff in a lawsuit against Home Depot and local police for abuse. ICE retaliated.

We all saw the Cicero case: children were left crying on the side of an industrial road after the parents were taken away by ICE. That is state-sanctioned cruelty against children, the President's specialty.

DHS insists they target criminal immigrants, yet in Elgin, in the dead of night, ICE staged a reckless raid with helicopters and armored trucks parading detainees for cameras. Secretary Noem showed up for 5 seconds of fame and rushed to declare: Mission accomplished.

The reality is two U.S. citizens were detained. They were not criminals; not even immigrants.

To quote the President: They don't know what they are doing.

What we see are workers punished, children traumatized, U.S. citizens abducted in their sleep, and a father, Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez, shot dead. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of cases like this.

We celebrate Hispanic heritage, but we also issue a warning. Today it is Latinos and other immigrants under attack. Tomorrow it will be others. Once institutions are built to target and control, they don't surrender power, they expand it.

Like the military-industrial complex, they find new enemies and new missions, new excuses to keep the money flowing and the machinery of fear alive.

That is why we will not look away. This is bigger than one community and bigger than one city. It is about the kind of country we are becoming.

Chicago will not be intimidated, and I will not stop demanding truth and

dignity for Silverio, William, or the children in Cicero, and for every family who deserves to live free from state terror.

TRIBUTE TO CHARLIE KIRK

(Mr. LANGWORTHY of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life of Charlie Kirk, a husband, a father, a follower of Jesus Christ, and a proud American who devoted himself and his life to awakening civic courage in a new generation.

Charlie's faith was central to who he was. He did not shy away from declaring it, nor did he compromise it for the sake of convenience or applause. He was a proud believer in Jesus Christ. We take comfort knowing that today, he is with the Lord.

Charlie celebrated the Judeo-Christian values on which this Nation was founded: faith, family, freedom, responsibility. He reminded us that without those values, America would lose the very foundation of its strength.

Charlie built his life's work around inspiring others, especially young people, to embrace their responsibilities as American citizens. He told them to get involved, learn your history, speak your mind, and stand firm in your beliefs. He taught America's college students that you could stand up for your values, even if you dared to be a conservative on a liberal campus where your beliefs were vilified.

He told them to flex their First Amendment rights, to debate honestly, and to speak boldly, even if professors and campus culture declared them wrong for rejecting socialist or Marxist teachings. Charlie knew America was the greatest country in the history of the world, and he gave students the backbone to defend that truth.

He made complex issues clear, and he welcomed debate because he trusted the American people to recognize truth when they heard it. He insisted that free speech was not a partisan slogan but the lifeblood of our free society.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to ignore the cruel fact that Charlie's life was cut short by a coward who murdered him in cold blood. But let me be clear: That act of violence did not silence Charlie's voice. It amplified it. Millions and millions of Americans and countless more around the world now know what Charlie stood for, what he worked for, and ultimately what he died for. His legacy is not diminished by his death; it is magnified. The ideas he championed and the courage he displayed are now reaching more hearts and minds than they ever have before.

Beyond the public stage, Charlie held the most important roles any of us can claim, that of being a husband and a father. He loved his family very dearly, and he drew strength from his faith. He reminded us that the real work in America doesn't happen in the halls of

power but at the family dinner table, in our houses of worship, in our neighborhoods, and at the ballot box.

Charlie's life is measured in the legacy he leaves. Look at the students who registered to vote because he asked them to. Look at the young leaders who chose to serve their communities because he told them they were needed. Look at the millions who felt less alone because he was brave enough to raise his voice. They had impact. That is real impact. That is a life well lived and a mission faithfully pursued.

To Charlie's wife, Erika, to his beautiful children, and to his family: My and my family's deepest condolences and prayers are with you. May you be sustained by the prayers of a very grateful nation for Charlie's life, and may you take comfort in knowing that Charlie's voice echoes louder than ever.

Charlie Kirk's life is a call to action. Let us honor him not with despair but with dedication, dedication to faith, to freedom, and dedication to the enduring promise of this great Nation. His courage lives on, his message lives on, and his fight for America will always live on.

May God bless Charlie Kirk's memory. May God comfort his family, and may God bless the United States of America.

REMEMBERING CONTRACT DAY

(Ms. PLASKETT of the Virgin Islands was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise with deep pride and reverence to honor Contract Day, recognized annually in the Virgin Islands on October 1. This day is one of the most defining in our history, and it honors and also celebrates four women, queens, who led the St. Croix Labor Rebellion of 1878, also known as Fireburn.

After slaves in the Danish West Indies organized, fought, and received their freedom from chattel slavery in 1848, a new type of slavery was formed to regulate the conditions of the now free workers.

The law stipulated a day wage and confined workers to one plantation each year, changeable only on Contract Day, October 1. These contracts offered no true liberty, forcing families into conditions that mirrored the impression of bondage.

Former slaves worked on the same plantations as before with little to no improvement in their living conditions, healthcare, education, even their very movement.

With rumors of improved conditions proving false, on October 1, 1878, the frustration and anger from the past 30 years of unfair treatment and harsh labor practices after obtaining freedom ignited a rebellion in Frederiksted, St. Croix. Our people declared enough is enough. Out of their courage came one of the most powerful labor uprisings in the Caribbean, one that continues to shape our identity and our fight for justice today.

At the center were four extraordinary women who we now revere as the Queens: Axeline "Agnes" Elizabeth Salomon, Mathilda McBean, Susanna Abrahamson, and Mary Thomas. These women, ordinary in their beginnings but extraordinary in their courage, stood as leaders and demanded all plantations improve wages and the repeal of the Labor Act of 1849 that kept workers in serf-like conditions. They gave voice to the pain and determination of an entire people.

□ 1020

The rebellion, the Fireburn, was not without tremendous cost: Fifty lives were lost. Many were injured. Countless homes and buildings were destroyed. Many of the protesters were killed by the Danish Government.

From that protest came reforms that dismantled the labor system. The rights of laborers could no longer be ignored.

The queens have left us a legacy of courage, reminding us that progress is rarely given. It is only through demand. They remind us that the dignity of work, personal freedom, and the pursuit of a better life are not privileges but speak to the very yearning of every human being.

We are now in a time when voices are being silenced by our own government. Those in the public sphere are fearful for themselves, their families, and their constituents. They are afraid to speak up and afraid to speak the truth.

People are afraid of losing resources and government funds. They are afraid of being targeted not just by online thugs but by their own government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to my people: Virgin Islanders, I am proud to be a Virgin Islander and that my family, my father's and my mother's ancestors, were there on St. Croix during that Fireburn and also during our amazing self-emancipation of 1848. The knowledge of the fact that, for centuries, my deepest roots—or, as we say, my navel string—are in the soil of what is now the Virgin Islands. It is what gives me voice and power.

It is not only those queens, but it is the young boy determined to be a marine biologist, the little girl who writes and dreams of being a poet. They are our history and our future.

Contract Day should give us courage. In the times that we are in, we may be limited and afraid, but we must use our voice to demand more.

BEATING HEART OF DEMOCRACY IS FREEDOM OF SPEECH

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

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, freedom of speech is the beating heart of a democracy. It is the entire reason that this building exists, so that we can talk out our differences.

Free societies do not fear free speech, even when that speech is hateful or

malignant or stupid. Free societies recognize that the only way to separate fact from fiction, love from hate, truth from lies, wisdom from folly, or good from evil is to put them side by side and to trust the people to know the difference.

No central authority must ever be given the power to take this vital freedom away from the people or to punish anyone solely for expressing their opinions.

We have based our entire form of government on the assumption that, when exposed to all sides and all viewpoints, more than half of the people are going to get it right more than half of the time. This assumption has served us well through the centuries.

The left rejects this premise. For many years, leftists have told us that speech is violence and can be answered with violence. This justifies their shouting down opponents and disrupting peaceful assemblies.

We have repeatedly watched leftist mobs burn our cities, loot shopkeepers, and assault people on the streets while leftist politicians egged them on.

We see the growing physical attacks on law enforcement. The left used the FBI to suppress debate on critical issues ranging from COVID lockdowns to climate hysteria. It has called for government commissions to regulate it. In Europe, leftist governments now criminalize it.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these points because a Member of this House recently made some truly vile and despicable remarks about Charlie Kirk after his brutal assassination. Her words should be loudly and universally condemned.

Last night, on the House floor, a resolution of censure was brought against her in the name of Charlie Kirk to formally punish her for her hateful rhetoric, but what did Charlie Kirk say about hate speech?

He said this 5 years ago: "My position is that even hate speech should be completely and totally allowed in our country. The most disgusting speech should absolutely be protected. . . . The ACLU used to hold this viewpoint. The American Civil Liberties Union, they sued so that legitimate Nazis could march through downtown Skokie. . . . Why would the ACLU do this? Because, they said, as soon as you use the word 'hate,' that is a very subjective term because then, all of a sudden, it is in the eyes or it is in the implementation of whomever has the power. So here is my belief: The more speech, the better."

That was Charlie Kirk.

We must never allow the left to become our teachers. If we ever do, we will lose our country. There will be no moral high ground, no changing of minds, and no rebirth of faith and freedom that we so desperately need.

Free societies do not fear words and thoughts, even those that are hateful, ugly, evil, or obscene, because the same freedom that protects these darkest