

prepare them for life. They nurture curiosity, instill core values, and light the spark of leadership that will carry students far beyond the school walls.

Located less than 2 miles up the road from the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge, it is only befitting that from Selma High School would emerge a teacher who is building the next generation of civic leaders, activists, and change agents.

After all, it was the people of Alabama's Seventh Congressional District that brought us the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These were ordinary Americans who dared to make this Nation live up to its highest ideals of equality and justice for all.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Alabama's Seventh Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Veronica Pitts. We are all so proud of her, and we are grateful for the work that she does each and every day to create opportunities for our students to thrive.

FUNDING CUTS TO SCIENCE

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

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because we face a critical moment for American leadership.

Amid mounting pressure to compete with China in energy, biotechnology, and AI dominance, any smart country would invest in itself and invest in the future. Unfortunately, this administration seems committed to doing the exact opposite.

Funding cuts to the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation have kneecapped the world-class research ecosystem that has made America great in the 20th century.

The politicization of science hurts the health and well-being of hard-working American citizens, and it compromises our ability as a nation to compete with other nations.

During August, I held a townhall with hundreds of my constituents who are researchers and graduate students in science, technology, engineering, and math. During the townhall, I discussed the dangers of this administration's agenda for public health, national security, and global competitiveness, and they asked that I tell you some of their stories.

One researcher studies ocean and Earth sciences at San Diego's prestigious Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Her research focuses on addressing the threats that toxic algal blooms pose to public health, fisheries, and coastal recreation.

With cuts to NASA, NOAA, and the National Science Foundation, she has seen labs at Scripps shut down and watched her coworkers lose their jobs.

Another scientist whose research focuses on ensuring energy security has felt the consequences of this adminis-

tration's policy. She has had her research censored by an administration that is indifferent to and may be hostile to scientific research. She has watched critical datasets and research tools disappear from government websites overnight. As she so aptly put it: "I have sacrificed so much of my livelihood for the betterment of our planet, only to see it all burn down in less than half a year."

Myiesha, a researcher at UCSD, overcame her own traumatic brain injuries and chronic illnesses so she could study the effects of infectious diseases on vulnerable patients. Now, Myiesha faces a new challenge: overcoming an administration that has cut her authorized research, cut her working hours almost in half, and cut her income significantly.

Mari is a Ph.D. candidate studying biomedical sciences at UCSD. She researches the neuroscience behind drug addiction so we can fight the opioid crisis. Just as her field gained momentum—overdose deaths declined in 2024 for the first time in over two decades—her lab was threatened with funding cuts. Mari has watched her lifesaving research be halted and had two of her own fellowship applications withdrawn because of the administration's actions.

Eugene is a Ph.D. candidate at Scripps. He is researching how to repurpose bacteria to stop certain cancer-causing proteins. The lab next door to Eugene's was doing a \$129 million trial on monkeys, working to develop an HIV vaccine. After the Trump administration canceled the lab's grant, the monkeys were killed needlessly, funding already spent was wasted, and patients will now have to wait even longer before we find an HIV vaccine.

Maya, a UCSD grad, cofounded BrainStorm Therapeutics, a biotech startup researching treatments for brain diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and epilepsy. Maya has seen the grants that support startups like hers cut. This threatens the transformational science that she and her colleagues are working on.

The final story I will tell, and maybe the most emblematic of the issue, is that of Dr. Ardem Patapoutian. He is a world-renowned researcher who won the Nobel Prize for his work on researching the sense of touch.

□ 1100

Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that is the kind of talent we strive to encourage in this country.

When his research funding was delayed by the Trump administration, Dr. Patapoutian received a call from China within 2 days. They offered him his pick of whatever research institution he wanted in China, guaranteeing his funding for the next 20 years.

Although his funding is still delayed, Dr. Patapoutian chose to stay here because of the world-class research ecosystem in the United States that is currently being eroded and under attack.

These stories show the risks we take when we cut funding that supports critical scientific advancement. China is far outpacing us in the research and development space. If we are going to keep up, we have to put up. If those of us in this body are truly serious about putting America first, this is simply not the way.

It is encouraging that, despite the administration's attempt to politicize science, a bipartisan bloc of the Senate Appropriations Committee has chosen to modestly increase scientific research funding rather than cut it. I am very thankful for that. I hope we will do the same here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the commitment to investing in America's future. We in the House should do the same. We need to invest in science and not undercut it.

HONORING FRANK JOHN SMITH

(Mr. HARIDOPOLOS of Florida was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Frank John Smith. Frank served 4 years in the United States Air Force as Airman Second Class, specializing in communications and navigation reports.

His service took him from Japan to Ripley, Tennessee. He and his small team successfully maintained multiple remote communication stations. For his dedication, Frank was awarded the Good Conduct Medal.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Florida's Space Coast and Treasure Coast, I thank Frank John Smith for his faithful service to our Nation. His commitment reflects the best of Brevard County and the United States Air Force.

RECOGNIZING SPACE COAST HONOR FLIGHT

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, our office was honored to take part in Space Coast Honor Flight send-off. Veterans from across the Space Coast traveled to Washington and were recognized for their faithful service.

I am proud that five members of our district team joined those families and supporters at the Melbourne Orlando International Airport to send off our heroes. These veterans represent each branch of our Armed Services, and their courage and sacrifice are a powerful testament to the freedoms we enjoy today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honor Flight organization and volunteers whose work ensures these patriots receive the honorable recognition they deserve. As the son of a veteran and parent of a son who serves in the United States Air Force, on behalf of the Space and Treasure Coast, I thank the veterans and the Active members of our service for their incredible sacrifice.

RECOGNIZING CHANDLER BRAID

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chandler Braid,

founder of Youth Republicans of Brevard, and many members of our community who came together in a recent vigil honoring the late Charlie Kirk.

Their gathering reflects the values Charlie Kirk lived by: faith, patriotism, and a commitment to developing the next generation of American leaders. Over 500 community members from across many different towns gathered for this vigil.

Charles Kirk will always be remembered as someone who challenged young people to be engaged as citizens and never shy away from standing for their beliefs. The vigil in Brevard County was just one example of many across the globe, showing that his influence will continue to inspire.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Youth Republicans of Brevard, led by Chandler Braid and her amazing leadership. They show that our best days are still ahead. We will always remember Charlie's incredible legacy, patriotism, and love of our country.

ENSURING FUNDING FOR COMMUNITIES

(Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, Republicans say they have a mandate. President Trump has told his party, don't even bother working with Democrats. Congressional Republicans wanted to go it alone when they passed President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

The American people are now finding out it is really a pretty big, ugly mess, especially when it comes to their healthcare and their everyday lives.

Republicans made devastating healthcare cuts to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. They made \$990 billion worth of cuts. We are now just 2 weeks away from a government shutdown.

Speaker JOHNSON is, once again, refusing to work across the aisle with Democrats. Democrats want to prevent exploding health insurance premiums. They have already started to show up in some people's mail. That is because the Affordable Care Act subsidies are about to expire. Oh, that was part of President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure that the funding Congress passes is actually delivered to the people in our communities, and I don't want it to be illegally cut or withheld by the Trump administration. We are seeing cuts in CDC, NIH, and the Department of Education. We all know what happened to the State Department and USAID. It was basically just stamped out from existence.

If House Republican leadership wants to go it alone on Federal funding to keep our government open, well, that is their prerogative. They shouldn't expect my vote.

CALLING FOR EMPATHY IN THE FACE OF TRAGEDY

(Ms. ANSARI of Arizona was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. ANSARI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for empathy in the wake of fear-driven hate. Fear has become the air we breathe in America.

Parents breathe it as they drop their kids at school, wondering if today will be the day they get a call that no parent should ever get. Teachers breathe it, walking into classrooms, rehearsing how they might shield their students.

Immigrant families breathe it in their own neighborhoods where ICE raids at schools and festivals turn everyday life into a source of terror. Transgender Americans breathe it just stepping outside, never knowing if they will be targeted for simply existing as themselves.

Journalists and everyday Americans breathe it for simply exercising their free speech rights. Elected leaders, including myself, breathe it after watching colleagues and public figures gunned down in front of their families.

This is the America we are living in right now, and this is not okay. We don't need to agree with someone's politics to say that their murder is a tragedy. The assassination of Charles Kirk, the murders of Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, and the countless children lost to school shootings, are not partisan issues. These are human tragedies.

Violence against any American is violence against us all. Yet what did we hear in the immediate aftermath? We didn't have space for grace or respect for families left behind. We heard Fox News hosts declare this is a war.

Mr. Speaker, that is not what America needs right now. That instinct to weaponize tragedy betrays our humanity because political disagreements, even vast ideological differences, never justify violence.

The assassination of Charlie Kirk is a reminder of the imminent threat that having so many guns in our society poses to all of us, not just to our immediate safety, but to our freedom and our democracy. Violence cannot heal division. History teaches us that it only deepens it.

Somewhere along the way we have lost our empathy. We started debating which families deserve protection, which communities deserve safety, and which children deserve dignity. That is not who we are supposed to be.

□ 1110

Empathy is not weakness. Empathy is strength, and empathy is action. It is action against the epidemic of loneliness that leaves millions disconnected and vulnerable, a crisis that fuels despair and radicalization.

We need to invest in connection in this country: in schools, in civic spaces, in mental health services, and in communities where people can see one another as human beings again.

Empathy is action against the viciousness of unchecked social media. Cruelty isn't an accident of these platforms. It is their business model.

When algorithms reward division and hate, that hate doesn't stay online. It shows up in our streets, in our schools, and in our politics.

Congress cannot keep looking away while Big Tech profits from tearing our communities apart. Empathy is action against gun violence, the fear that stalks every one of us. It stalks every school, every community, and every public gathering.

Enough with the excuses. Enough is enough.

Children's lives are worth more than the profits of gun manufacturers. We need commonsense gun safety laws, and we need funding for mental health care.

We cannot weaponize tragedy to silence dissent. When hate and fear are unleashed, then nobody is safe. Today it may be immigrants; tomorrow, transgender Americans; last week, a conservative political leader. Hate corrodes the bonds of belonging for all of us.

I am asking my colleagues: Resist the temptation to harden your hearts. Choose empathy instead. Choose courage over cruelty. Choose action over indifference.

That is because our strength as a nation will never be measured by how viciously we fight one another, but how deeply we care for one another. Let this moment of grief be a call to empathy, to decency, and to action.

A LETTER FROM SURVIVORS OF JEFFREY EPSTEIN AND GHISLAINE MAXWELL

(Ms. MORRISON of Minnesota was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. MORRISON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to read a letter from more than 20 survivors of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. I implore my colleagues and all Americans to listen to their words.

Dear Members of the Republican Women's Caucus:

We write to you today with urgency, respect, and hope. Strong American women are serving in the House of Representatives, and survivors of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell's abuse need you to stand with them.

It is difficult to articulate the appreciation that we have for each member of the Democratic Women's Caucus who took the time to meet with us on September 3, 2025. Because of the intrepid leadership of Chairwoman TERESA LEGER FERNANDEZ and the Congresswomen who gathered together to support us, we left the Capitol with dignity and resolve. We are likewise eternally grateful to Congresswomen MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, LAUREN BOEBERT, and NANCY MACE, as well as to Congressman THOMAS MASSIE and RO KHANNA, for taking bold steps to help us in our quest for justice. While we are at a loss for how supporting survivors or transparency could ever be seen as a "hostile act," what you are doing is not only right, it is necessary. This is not a partisan issue. It is a human issue.