

few days about what we can do to fight back. I am fully committed to using every tool at my disposal to resist this egregious, un-American, and unconstitutional overreach.

To those listening, call your Representatives and tell them how you feel about this out-of-touch billionaire reaching his hands into your private information. To the civil servant employees who work every day to keep the government running, I ask you to stand your ground.

Tell those minions of the unelected billionaire donor that you don't work for them; you work for the American people. When they demand access, tell them no. When they tell you that you are dismissed, tell them to speak to your union rep because you are not leaving until you hear from them.

Stand up, American people. Stand up for your families and protect your rights. To my Republican colleagues, aren't there at least three who believe in America?

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise to discuss a topic fundamental to the strength of our workforce and the future of our economy: career and technical education, otherwise known as CTE.

Yesterday, I introduced a resolution celebrating CTE month and highlighting these programs' vital role in preparing students for high-skill, high-wage careers. The reach of CTE programs is vast. They shape industries that are the backbone of our economy, healthcare, information technology, advanced manufacturing, infrastructure, and the skilled trades, just to name a few.

With a record number of learners enrolled in CTE programs nationwide, more than 12 million, it is clear that these initiatives are making a difference. However, we still face a major challenge: a skills gap.

Today, there are approximately 8 million job openings in this country. Businesses, both large and small, are struggling to find qualified workers with specialized skills needed to compete in an ever-evolving job market.

Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and automation are reshaping our economy, demanding higher levels of expertise, problem-solving, and adaptability from our workforce. The solution is clear: We must continue to invest in CTE programs.

These programs bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring that students and workers of all

ages have the tools that they need to succeed. CTE is a powerful pathway to success.

By providing hands-on experience, industry certifications, and real-world knowledge applications, CTE empowers individuals to secure high-quality jobs and build prosperous careers.

I have long recognized the importance of CTE through legislation like the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. This investment modernizes Federal support for CTE programs and provides greater flexibility for States and local communities to tailor education to workforce needs.

A practical outcome of this that I have seen is we were under-enrolled, and, today, as a result of that legislation, we now have waiting lists of individuals, both youth and adults, seeking this pathway to success in life.

The results speak for themselves. According to a recent analysis, CTE students in secondary programs have a 4-year graduation rate of over 96 percent. This is significantly higher than the national average.

According to the CTE Research Network, which conducts analyses of CTE in coordination with the Institute of Education Sciences at the Department of Education, CTE has significant, positive impacts on several high school outcomes, including academic achievement, employability skills, and post-secondary readiness.

Employers also report that CTE graduates are better prepared for the workforce, stating they possess the necessary technical skills and work readiness to excel in their roles. None of this would be possible without the dedicated educators, administrators, and support staff who work tirelessly to promote and expand CTE programs.

Their commitment to student success is invaluable, and we owe them our deepest gratitude for preparing the next generation of skilled professionals.

I thank my partner on this legislation here in the House, Representative BONAMICI, as well as my counterparts across the Capitol, Senators BALDWIN, BUDD, Kaine, and YOUNG, for joining me in introducing this commonsense effort.

Madam Speaker, as we look ahead, we must remain committed to strengthening CTE, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has access to these opportunities. By doing so, we close the skills gap and build a more competitive and resilient economy that benefits all Americans.

“WE WERE STRANGERS ONCE,
TOO”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. McIVER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. McIVER. Madam Speaker, I rise to celebrate the incredible voices and

stories captured in “We Were Strangers Once, Too.” This is a powerful memoir retelling the immigrant journeys and stories of students from my district.

I had the opportunity to meet these young authors and witness them share vulnerable and deeply personal experiences. Their stories highlighted the difficult reality for many migrants who leave their home country in pursuit of a better life.

These stories highlight something else: Hope—hope for a brighter future and hope rooted in the belief that, no matter where we come from, we all deserve dignity, safety, and happiness.

As immigrants are othered by divisive policies, stories like these bring us closer together and show our shared humanity is stronger than what tries to divide us. They serve as a reminder, as President Obama once said: “We were strangers once, too.”

I commend the bravery of the student authors sharing these truths and the work of their editor, Shawn Adler, who is here with us in the gallery today. Thank you for sharing your voices with the world.

HONORING INEZ ROSALIE ALICK ELLIOT'S 108TH
BIRTHDAY

Mrs. McIVER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Inez Rosalie Alick Elliot, who just celebrated her 108th birthday. Known as Rose to family and friends, she celebrated her 108th birthday on January 20.

Faith has always been a cornerstone for Rose's life. A long-time member of Calvary Baptist Church in East Orange, Rose embodies the spirit of service and dedication. Her commitment to our community has been recognized with numerous accolades.

She was honored with the Essex County Legends Award for her contributions and work improving the lives of fellow seniors. Known for her grace, laughter, and wisdom, she remains a positive role model for all of us. She is a beacon of inspiration, reminding us all that faith, service, and laughter are the keys to a long, fulfilling life. Happy birthday, Rose.

MAKING SNAP MORE ACCESSIBLE

Mrs. McIVER. Madam Speaker, I introduced the SNAP Benefits Fairness Act in the U.S. House with Representative SHONTEL BROWN to remove the housing cap on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and make SNAP benefits more accessible to those who need them.

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Madam Speaker, the cost of housing is taking up more and more of Americans' paychecks, and SNAP benefits are not keeping up. It is time to bring SNAP up to speed and create opportunities for working families to use essential programs like SNAP that reduce poverty and help them make ends meet.

By getting rid of the shelter cap, this bill ensures working families who are spending too much on rent and utilities get the benefits they deserve without being punished by high housing costs.

I am grateful to Representative BROWN for joining me on this legislation that will help ease the burden on families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds Members that the rules do not allow references to persons in the gallery.

ELON MUSK AND DEMOCRACY

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, hell hath no fury like the deep state scorned. That has become obvious from the over-the-top hysterics directed against Elon Musk as he turns over bureaucratic rocks and shines a light on what has been going on beneath them.

What he has already exposed should infuriate and alarm every American. Millions of taxpayer dollars are covertly used to support a tax on the Democrats' political opponents, millions more to support far-left causes in this and other countries, millions of dollars that were supposed to defend Ukraine and that instead vanished into the pockets of Ukrainian businessmen, millions more to fund the Wuhan lab that unleashed COVID on the world, \$15 million spent on condoms for the Taliban, millions more to support illegal aliens entering our country, and still millions more on promoting leftist gender ideology around the world.

America is on the verge of bankruptcy, yet the elites within our government have no conscience at all as they hollow out the earnings of working Americans to fund their pet ideological causes. Instead of hanging their heads in shame, the Democrats actively defend this waste.

Congress never voted to spend money in this manner. Unelected bureaucrats within the sprawling Federal labyrinth did this behind the backs not only of the American people but of their elected Representatives.

They say the most closely guarded State secrets are not those marked "top secret" but those considered embarrassing. By exposing this outrageous waste, Mr. Musk has embarrassed the Democrats, which is why they tried to bar him from opening the books for the American people to see. Now that those embarrassing secrets are being revealed, the left has reverted to its tired old habits of personal attacks and character assassination.

The new boss hires an accountant. The accountant says: Joe, let's see the expense account records. Suddenly, it is a threat to democracy and a constitutional crisis. A threat to democracy? That is somewhat ironic from a party that just threw out a year's worth of primary elections when they didn't like the candidate that their own voters selected.

It turned out their voters didn't like their unelected nominee either, and

Americans instead elected Donald Trump as President with an overwhelming majority.

To my Democratic colleagues, that is what is called democracy.

The Democrats shout constitutional crisis. Do they not understand, that under our Constitution, executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States? All executive power flows from the President to his subordinates and advisers. That includes Elon Musk, as well as every bureaucrat at USAID.

Under our Constitution, there is no executive power that is independent of the President. The difference is that Elon Musk is carrying out the policies that the people elected this government to pursue and the bureaucrats at USAID are not. That is a big problem in a democracy.

The Democrats tell us that it is undemocratic for the democratically elected President to question how the unelected bureaucracy is executing the laws, laws that the President is elected to uphold. How can a President faithfully execute the laws if he and his deputies cannot see clearly and accurately where the public money is going, verify that it is being spent in accordance with the law, and put a stop to it when it is not?

The true threat to democracy is an entrenched ruling class that operates entirely outside the control of the duly elected representatives of the people. Once that takes root, elections become meaningless because the people's decisions at the ballot box are no longer executed by their government. The Federal bureaucracy increasingly acts independently and often in defiance of the people's choices.

That was the story of the first Trump Presidency. It must not be the story of the second or of any future Presidency because it is the very definition of a tyranny, a government operating outside the control of the people. That is what the Democrats are now advocating.

In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln noted the great task remaining before us. He offered a prayer, really, "that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the Earth."

That remains the great question and the great challenge of our generation. It is a destiny that we must fulfill.

HONORING THE LIFE OF WILLIAM GEARY, SR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember William Geary, Sr., a remarkable man whose life was a testament to service, dedication, and love for his family, our country, and our community.

William Geary, Sr., grew up on Good Avenue in South Buffalo, the proud son

of a large Irish Catholic family. He attended South Park High School before answering the call of duty, serving in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam war. A two-tour veteran, he returned from his first deployment to meet the love of his life, Cathleen, his future wife, on a blind date. Just 2 weeks later, they were married and began their journey together.

After his decorated military service, Bill dedicated his life to hard work and our community. A proud union man and retired Teamster, he found a second career at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park. There, he worked diligently to preserve the history of our Nation's servicemembers, laboring tirelessly on the ships he loved so much.

Service was the cornerstone of Bill's life. Whether it was his devotion to his family, his dedication to veterans, or his willingness to lend a hand or an ear to anyone in need, he lived by the creed of putting others before himself.

Bill faced health challenges later in life due to complications from Agent Orange and COPD. He received care at the Buffalo VA Medical Center, where he considered his doctors, nurses, and aides heroes. His enduring wish was to improve the VA system for others, a mission his family carries forward in his honor.

Bill was a devoted husband to Cathleen, a loving father to Kellie, Kathryn, and William Jr., and a proud grandfather to seven. William Jr. has proudly carried on his father's legacy of public service as a senior master sergeant in the United States Air Force Reserve and is the Erie County commissioner of public works.

Today, as we remember William Geary, Sr., we reflect on a life well lived, a life of service, sacrifice, and unconditional love. May his legacy inspire us to uphold the values he embodied and to continue striving for a better future for our families and communities.

May he rest in peace.

HONORING THE LIFE OF WILLIAM DUNFORD, JR.

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of William Dunford, Jr., a dedicated public servant, educator, husband, and father.

Bill's life was defined by his unwavering commitment to his family and our entire community. Over his 17-year career as a University of Buffalo police officer, he demonstrated a steadfast dedication to protecting and serving. As the chair of the criminal justice program at Erie Community College, he taught and mentored countless young officers, instilling in them the importance of compassion, integrity, and professionalism. He believed in learning through experience.

Bill brought students on Sleep Outs to hear from people living on the streets about their experiences and challenges, teaching them about the human side of law enforcement. Bill wanted his students to see, feel, and