

ADDRESSING CALIFORNIA
WILDFIRES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, my district has been hit by wildfires that constitute the greatest fire, in terms of total property damage, in the history of America. There are those who say that California should not get aid unless we change—get this—our voter registration laws.

Different States have different voter registration processes, and they are all wonderful. They tend to work pretty well, and I disagree with some of them. Why condition aid? I have been on this floor time and again and voted for aid to Louisiana when they were hit with horrific hurricanes. I never once said, no, let's turn to hurricane victims and tell them to keep sleeping on their cousin's couch for months and years until Louisiana changes its abortion laws.

I disagree with Louisiana's abortion laws. A woman ought to have the right to choose. I believe that strongly. It never occurred to me to turn to individual families and deny them the aid they need to overcome a giant disaster and to hold them hostage in an effort to get their State legislatures to change their statutes. I hope this House will not do the same to California.

Then, we are told that the fires in the Palisades relate to California's statewide water management system. This is absolutely absurd. In Los Angeles County, our reservoirs are full to overflowing. We have plenty of water to live our lives. Even in the middle of the fires, no Los Angeleno was told to take a short shower or not to water their plants outside.

We have debates on how to use water in California, but it had nothing to do—why were fire hydrants dry in my district? We have the Palisades, which go up quite steeply. The water system brings that water in at the bottom of the Palisades at sea level. Then, we have to pump the water up. We have a good system to pump the water, a system quite capable of making sure everybody in the Palisades could live their lives and water their plants and we could fight five house fires all at the same time.

Then, we were hit not with 5 but with 500 house fires at the same time, with winds at an unimaginable level hurling cinders, flaming cinders, as large as golf balls, in some cases as large as baseballs, hundreds of yards. We did not have a water pumping system capable of bringing our fully sufficient water to where it was needed up in the Palisades.

The President said that he is going to build you the fastest water pumping system in the history of America to make sure that you can bring that water up the hill. That is fine.

Instead, what does he do? He has this ridiculous photo op where he released millions and millions of gallons of water in January. Not a drop of that water has reached L.A. County. That is irrigation water released at the wrong time, in January, that flows into basically a dry lake bed where it evaporates.

We wasted enormous amounts of water. Thank God we stepped in and the local officials prevented it from getting worse. That is why not a single Republican Member from California will come here and say anything good about that ridiculous photo op where Donald Trump forces the Federal Government to waste water in California that could have been used and would have been used in spring and summer to grow crops for America.

Talk about bad management. Trump froze the money across all the Federal Government. He had to tell people that at least he didn't freeze their Social Security checks, although our local health system clinics aren't getting money.

What else did he freeze? He froze Community Wildfire Defense Grants. He came to my district. He showed sympathy for the victims, but we also needed him there to inspire the FEMA workers those victims rely on. They are working 12-hour shifts in some cases to bring people the help they need.

What does he do to the FEMA workers? First, he insults them. Then, he injures FEMA. How does he insult them? He declares he wants to abolish FEMA. That is a great thing to say right in the middle of the most intense part of the disaster recovery effort.

Then, he turns to FEMA workers and says he will give them 8 months of pay if they will just quit in the middle of the disaster recovery period. Right when we need them, he wants them to quit, and he is going to pay them to quit.

He applies this not only to FEMA workers working the disaster recovery areas both in North Carolina and California, but he also applies this to temporary workers. FEMA has probably more temporary workers per capita than any other government agency because when there are disasters, they hire local people. If workers are only going to have a job for 6 months, they can announce that they are giving up the job and get paid for 7 or 8 months and do no work.

Obviously, this will impair FEMA's ability to help the people in my district. What will also be a problem is he is offering a buyout to EPA workers. These are the people who are the specialists in toxics removal, dealing with a fire that has caused more Teslas and other electric cars to go up in smoke than any other fire in the history of the world, creating a toxic problem that only a few people know how to deal with. He is offering them a buyout, telling them to quit and stay home.

This effort to insult and then injure is also applied to my State. We had House Committee on the Judiciary hearings, the whole purpose of which was to incense California, not just for fun, although some Members had fun, but to injure California by creating a political environment that says we are not going to help people recover from this disaster because they are Californians and we hate Californians. That is not a good thing to do when we are down and when we are trying to come up from this disaster.

I should point out that this disaster affected not only my district but there were also the Altadena and Pasadena fires in JUDY CHU's district. I hope this Congress provides the help it has always provided to the victims of enormous disasters.

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A similar problem we have is with the CIA where intelligence officers have been offered a buyout. Well, who is going to take the buyout? The best and the brightest who can make at least as much money and probably a lot more in the private sector will take the buyout. You lose your best people. Those in the last year of their service, when we need them to pass on their knowledge, they are going to show us that they know that they don't have to work, and they can still get the money thanks to Donald Trump.

What does it take to replace these workers, these intelligence officers? Well, first you have to put them through the security clearance. That can take a year. Then they have to learn foreign languages. Then they have to learn their craft.

Who benefits from this? Our enemies, the terrorists, China, Russia, North Korea and Iran benefit from this.

Finally, it impairs the ability of the CIA to carry on operations that could undercut the support of the Ayatollahs and hopefully bring regime change and democracy to Iran. The only way to be absolutely sure that you don't have a nuclear Islamic Republic of Iran is not to have an Islamic Republic of Iran.

We see this not only at the CIA but at the FBI where eight of the top people have been shown the door, where 5,000 are under investigation for, what, for working the files they were assigned, which they are required to do.

Now, I wasn't surprised when President Trump eliminated all future investigations of those who came to this floor and imperiled our democracy and imperiled the lives of many of us and our colleagues. It does surprise me that just because an FBI special agent was assigned a file they are now under investigation, it looks like they might get fired, and they are being encouraged to quit. They get 8 months or they can stick around and see whether Trump fires them. That free vacation is looking better and better.

How big is this? It affects 5,000 out of the 37,000 employees of the FBI. The FBI only has 14,000 special agents. I believe most of those 5,000 are among

those agents, those less than 14,000 agents.

If you decapitate the FBI, Americans will die. Mark my words, if you decimate the FBI, Americans will die. If you dismantle the FBI, Americans will die. Americans will die from the drugs and the gangs, and they will die from the terrorism. This attack on the FBI is an attack on the safety of all Americans.

Another attack that doesn't seem like it is an attack on Americans, but really is, is the decimation of USAID.

Now, I would expect Donald Trump—and I would applaud Donald Trump if he was talking about reforming, reevaluating, reprioritizing USAID, but instead, it seems that he is focused on dismantling USAID.

Now, it is not like nobody thinks that is a good idea. Just today, Vladimir Putin applauded President Trump for decimating and in effect calling for the abolition of USAID. Now, Vladimir Putin doesn't care about the Constitution of the United States, but we should.

Under that Constitution, this Congress passed into the law of the land statutes providing for USAID to operate. Then we passed statutes saying that for this or that operation, this or that amount of money should be spent. Laws of the land creating the programs, laws of the land indicating how much money should be spent on those programs, those are laws that are being shredded by king Donald the first.

So who benefits from this? Well, there are three beneficiaries: China, disease, and mass migration. Let's first look at China. First, the Chinese are smart enough not to compliment Donald Trump for destroying USAID because they see an opportunity, particularly in the islands of the Pacific, islands my father risked his life for during World War II. They see in the Pacific islands small countries where just a little bit of aid can go a long way for the very few people who live there. These are strategic islands, as we learned in the 1940s. China sees us abandoning the world, and they come in in a position to grow in world influence.

How much money are we speaking about here? If you look at the polling, Americans say, well, our foreign aid budget must be 25 percent of our Federal budget, and it should be lower. It should be down to 10 percent of our Federal budget.

Our foreign aid budget is less than 1 percent of our Federal budget. No one concerned with foreign aid has dreamt of it being 10 percent. It is less than 1 percent of our Federal budget. It is less than one quarter of 1 percent of our GDP, and for that we can vie with China for influence.

There is more. There is health. A lot of USAID money is spent to deal with malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, Ebola, and bird flu. If you have no morality, if you do not care whether the world's most powerful economic engine

does anything to help the poorest of the poor in the world, you might at least take a look at the health effects because every time one of these communicable diseases flourishes abroad, it can come here. We saw that with HIV/AIDS. We fear that with Ebola. Every single person who gets HIV/AIDS, every single person with tuberculosis gives the disease another little laboratory in which it might mutate and become more difficult for us to control when it does come here.

We are talking about spending money for team human versus team virus and team pathogen. How much will it cost for us to treat people if there is a new drug-resistant strain of tuberculosis or a drug-resistant or a more communicable version of HIV/AIDS?

Finally, we are all focused on the price of eggs. We are all paying an extra 50 cents for every egg at Waffle House. Bird flu is combated by USAID around the world, and every chicken that gets bird flu in a very poor country is a chance for that flu to mutate and come to the United States in strength and form.

If you are concerned about the health of Americans and the price we pay for our groceries, USAID's efforts to control disease should matter to you.

Finally, when people are faced with the worst catastrophes, with drought, with war, with famine, those are the people most likely to engage in mass migration. Even if you have no morality, even if you do not want to help the least of these with even one quarter of 1 percent of the American GDP, do not take action, Mr. President, that expands the power of the Chinese Communist Party, expands the opportunity for disease around the world, and creates mass migration that will not be stopped by the wall you didn't build.

Then we are told lies about USAID. We are told that \$50 million was spent for condoms in Gaza, then the President himself said \$100 million. How about the truth not one penny was spent? That was a complete lie. That doesn't mean we haven't spent some money in Gaza. We did provide for field hospitals in Gaza. People were dying in Gaza, and we provided help. You can argue about what our policy in Gaza should be, but not one penny was spent on condoms.

You know, there was another lie told that wasn't a lie, it was actually true. He said we spent \$6 million on tourism for Egypt. That money wasn't exactly spent on tourism, but it related to transportation. It is mostly true, except it was a program that Donald Trump established in his first term. He is saying, abolish USAID because of what he did in his first term.

While we are talking about lying about how money is spent, let's focus on another lie. They told the lie that USAID had spent \$8 million on subscriptions to POLITICO Pro, a publication. The truth is the entire executive branch spent \$8 million. Okay. Is this a woke publication, a waste of money, a

subsidy for leftwing journalism and activism? Well, maybe it is. But Republicans in the House of Representatives last year and all their various congressional offices just in the House, I am not even including the Senate, spent \$800,000 in subscriptions to POLITICO Pro. Individual decisions were made in over 200 offices. They decided that the subscription was necessary to run their office.

Do you know what? POLITICO Pro has a competitor, which provides much of the same kind of research, called Bloomberg Government, and Republicans in the House of Representatives spent another \$800,000 in 1 year. That seems like a lot of money, especially when you realize that the executive branch is a lot bigger than Congress.

If you want to visualize it, the Republicans in Congress who spent \$800,000 on POLITICO Pro have their offices in 1½ office buildings. Now, close your eyes and think about how many office buildings the U.S. Government occupies.

Well, why do congressional offices and other policymaking offices spend money on these publications? It is because it is a lot more efficient to get an analysis that is published and footnoted by experts than it is to hire fine staff, and I have some here, to do the separate research for every entity in every office and every congressional office. That is a decision each Member of Congress makes when they decide whether to subscribe to Bloomberg Government and POLITICO Pro. That is also a decision that every doctor and medical researcher makes when they decide whether to subscribe to expensive medical journals.

The fact is it is cheaper to read an article that is specialized and detailed and more expensive than your general purpose articles. This is not a newspaper with events in my city. This is not a huge mass market publication. It is cheaper to subscribe to a specialty journal than it is to hire hundreds of people to do your own research. That is why Members of Congress subscribe to POLITICO Pro and spend \$800,000 on it. Yet, the President of the United States first lies and says it was \$8 million for USAID and then lies and says, oh, it is some sort of subsidy to some woke, liberal activist publication.

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I know my colleagues well. I know my Republican colleagues well. Very few of them are interested in subsidizing woke journalism.

Let's focus a little bit about the President's discussion of Gaza. Apparently, he wants to buy Greenland, and he is looking for a source of funds to buy Greenland. He thinks he can do it by selling timeshare condos in Gaza. I do not often provide investment advice. I certainly did back when I worked in the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, do not invest in timeshares in Gaza. It is not a good idea. The idea is that 2 million people

should be moved from Gaza. These are two contradictory ideas. Secretary of State Rubio says that these people are going to move out temporarily, and then they can move back in. Apparently a U.S. President who doesn't want to spend a dime on USAID wants to build fancy condos for every resident of Gaza.

Secretary Rubio talks about how the people of Gaza are going to move out and then they are going to move back in to a beautiful condo. However, President Trump has said the opposite. He says that they are not going back. Instead, he believes that some country in the world is supposed to take in 2 million people from Gaza. So far he has identified 0.0 countries willing to take 0.0 Gazans in. He certainly hasn't volunteered that the United States would take them in.

Then, second, he has got to persuade Gazans to leave, and they don't want to leave. Although, I guess if he offered them a luxury suite in Mar-a-Lago, then they would certainly consider it.

What has he done with this proposal? First, he has embarrassed America. It is absolutely silly. Second, he has changed the political makeup inside Israel to empower those who believe that the Israeli settlers should move into Gaza and partially displace the Gazan population.

We need a permanent cease-fire in Gaza, and we need the destruction of Hamas. I welcome the recent comments of Israel where they recognize that Hamas fighters are not going to surrender for Israeli prisons and have said that it is acceptable if the Hamas fighters depart the region. We saw that in 1982 or 1983 when so many terrorists departed Lebanon for Tunis.

We can see a situation in which the people of Gaza without Hamas are able to live in peace. It is not going to be easy. I am not predicting that it is going to happen, but that is certainly our goal.

Mr. Speaker, let me focus on one other issue, and that is an issue mentioned by the prior speaker from Arizona: Artificial intelligence. Trillions of dollars are being spent around the world, more in the United States than anywhere else, to make artificial intelligence more powerful. Basically, not a penny is being spent to make sure that as we make it more powerful that we are monitoring for or preventing self-awareness, ambition, and a desire to take control.

Then we are told: Well, my God, if we were to spend a penny worried about controlling AI, then the Chinese are going to be ahead of us in developing AI. We can't afford a single penny on anything other than making AI more powerful.

If AI is self-aware and if AI develops a survival instinct, then AI will be able to understand many things, but even AI may not understand why the human race developed its own successor, a level of intelligence that is transhuman.

The last time there was a new level of intelligence on this planet is when our ancestors said hello to Neanderthal, and then we said good-bye to Neanderthal.

If you are going to develop a new level of intelligence, then perhaps it would be intelligent if we were to spend 1 percent, one-half of 1 percent, making sure that AI is a tool of human beings and not a creature with its own objectives. Yet, so far, not one penny.

I look forward to working, I hope, with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make sure that as we make AI more powerful, we make sure that we keep AI under control.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, February 10, 2025, at noon for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

EC-374. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Office of the Executive Director, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Annual Update of Filing Fees [Docket No.: RM525-5-000] (RIN: 1902-AG27) received February 5, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

EC-375. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Office of Enforcement, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment Rule [Docket No.: RM25-4-000] received February 5, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-376. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Electronic Issuance of Aircraft Registration and Dealer Certificates [Docket No.: FAA-2024-2765; Amdt. No. 47-36] (RIN: 2120-AM08) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-377. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Aircraft Registration and Recordation Procedural Updates: Original Documents and Stamping [Docket No.: FAA-2024-2764; Amdt. Nos. 47-35 AND 49-12] (RIN: 2120-AM07) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-378. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Establishment of Restricted Area R-2103C and Amendment of Restricted Area R-2103A and R-2103B; Fort Novosel, AL [Docket No.: FAA-2024-2691; Airspace Docket No.: 24-ASO-28] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-379. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Establishment of Area Navigation (RNAV) Routes Q-162 and Q-166; Southwest United States [Docket No.: FAA-2024-2444; Airspace Docket No.: 24-ASW-7] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-380. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Amendment of Class E Airspace; Presque Isle, ME [Docket No.: FAA-2024-0867; Airspace Docket No.: 24-ANE-3] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-381. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Establishment of Class E Airspace; Webster, SD [Docket No.: FAA-2024-0317; Airspace Docket No.: 24-AGL-7] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-382. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Revocation of the Kwajalein Island Class D and Class E Airspace in the Republic of the Marshall Islands [Docket No.: FAA-2024-2685; Airspace Docket No.: 24-AWP-104] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-383. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Amendment of Class E Airspace; Kenansville, NC [Docket No.: FAA-2024-1981; Airspace Docket No.: 24-ASO-22] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-384. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Modification of Class E Airspace; Crosby Municipal Airport, Crosby, ND [Docket No.: FAA-2024-2636; Airspace Docket No.: 24-AGL-33] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 3, 2025, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-385. A letter from the Manager, Legal Litigation and Support, FAA, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments [Docket No.: 31584; Amdt. No. 4147] (RIN: 2120-AA65) received