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## House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BAUMGARTNER).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

December 16, 2025.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

MIKE JOHNSON,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2025, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

### STRENGTHENING CHECKS AND BALANCES AND RULE OF LAW

(Mr. OLSZEWSKI of Maryland was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite my colleagues to join me in strengthening two of our Nation's key founding principles: checks and balances and the rule of law.

Join me in uplifting the idea that every person and institution within a government is subject to the same set of rules: rules established by, reviewed by, and enforced by three coequal

branches of government. Join me because these principles are under assault.

Mr. Speaker, none of us should accept it as normal practice that a President, any President, use their executive pardon power to absolve convicted drug kingpins, those found guilty of violently attacking law enforcement officers, and even a money laundering crypto magnate with ties to the President's family business. Yet, this is exactly what President Trump has done.

On his first day back in office, President Trump pardoned 1,500 people involved in the January 6 attack on the Capitol. Since then, he has pardoned or commuted the sentences of nearly 90 others.

Just recently, he added former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez to that list. Hernandez was serving a 45-year prison sentence for conspiring to smuggle more than 400 tons, or 4.5 billion doses, of cocaine into the U.S. Hernandez was also convicted of accepting bribes from violent drug cartel members to fuel his political career, shielding them from prosecution in exchange for their bribes.

Earlier this year, President Trump granted clemency to a drug dealer responsible for putting more than a thousand kilograms of cocaine onto Baltimore's streets. A Federal agent described the defendant as "one of the largest cocaine and heroin dealers to be arrested by the DEA in recent history."

President Trump is using the pardon power not to correct injustices but to absolve convicted criminals simply because he can. He has yet to offer a compelling reason for any of these clemency cases.

These abuses are especially pronounced under this administration, but they are certainly not unique to one party. Throughout history, Democratic and Republican Presidents have used clemency to reward allies and shield those close to them.

After the Civil War, President Johnson issued sweeping pardons for more than 13,000 former Confederates. President Clinton pardoned his half brother, who was also serving time for drug trafficking. President Biden pardoned his son, who was convicted on gun charges and had pleaded guilty to tax-related charges.

Some Presidents, including Presidents Trump and Biden, have issued preemptive pardons before prosecutors even had a chance to present their case in court and before the public had any opportunity to weigh the facts. It has to stop.

These abuses erode trust in our democratic system. They undermine the notion that all laws apply to all Americans. They lack the checks and balances envisioned by our Nation's Founders. They are now far too common and far too brazen. We must do something about it.

That is why I am introducing a straightforward constitutional amendment, one that adds balance and accountability to the pardon system by giving Congress the ability to review and overturn Presidential pardons and commutations.

Under my proposal, Members of Congress could petition for a review of pardons and overturn them with a two-thirds supermajority in the House and Senate. This amendment intentionally sets a fairly high standard. The goal is not to eliminate the President's pardon power but to encourage Presidents to think twice before issuing outrageous pardons. Should egregious cases persist, it gives Congress the ability to intervene.

As ethically questionable pardons have become increasingly common, it is no surprise that public trust in government is near an all-time low. According to the Partnership for Public Trust, only one in three Americans has confidence that their elected officials are acting in the public's best interest.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Two-thirds believe the Federal Government is corrupt.

One way to improve public trust is to stop the most brazen abuses of clemency. No more get-out-of-jail-free cards for the wealthy and well-connected. The time to act is now.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in my efforts.

### THE SPIRIT OF GEORGIA

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary effort that brought the *Spirit of Georgia*, a B-2 stealth bomber, back to operational flight after a serious incident more than 4 years ago.

During a hydraulic failure, the aircraft skidded along the runway and sustained major damage. Many questioned whether it would ever return to the skies. Instead of retiring the aircraft, airmen, engineers, and the B-2 program team came together with a goal to save it. Their work represented perseverance and belief in the mission.

The team removed the bomber from hazardous conditions, transported it for repair, and worked through design challenges and restoration steps. Their determination saved taxpayers millions and returned a strategic asset to service.

Mr. Speaker, on November 6, 2025, the *Spirit of Georgia* lifted off once again, proving what is possible when people work with purpose. This successful return is a tribute to American skill, teamwork, and resolve. The *Spirit of Georgia* lives on.

### CELEBRATING TWO OUTSTANDING ATHLETES

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate two outstanding student athletes at Augusta University.

Elyse Autrey, a sophomore women's basketball guard from Fairfax, Virginia, has been named Georgia's Own Student-Athletes of the Month for November. Over four games last month, she averaged 16.5 points, 5.8 rebounds, and 3.3 assists. Her leadership helped Augusta secure a road win over number two Coker, among other strong performances.

On the men's side, senior golfer Stefan Jacobs, from Johannesburg, South Africa, earned the same honor. Jacobs turned in a stellar round at the Pearl at Kalauao Invitational, finishing third out of 108 golfers in a final round of 5-under par. His strong showing helped the Augusta squad place third in team standings, with a collective 7-under finish.

Mr. Speaker, these two represent the very best of Jaguar athletics: dedication, discipline, and excellence on the court and course. They prove that student athletes can achieve both athletically and academically while contributing pride to their school.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Elyse Autrey and Stefan Jacobs for

their achievements and congratulate Augusta University for fostering such talent.

### TYBEE ISLAND BEST FISHING SPOT

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tybee Island, which has just been named the number one winter fishing spot for 2026 according to FishingBooker.

FishingBooker created the top 10 ranking with factors such as winter fish activity and species variety. It also looked at popularity, tourism, and insights from locals. Tybee Island topped the list, even beating out larger cities such as Jacksonville, Fort Myers, and Tacoma.

Just east of Savannah, Tybee Island is a barrier island with relaxed charm, wide beaches, and scenic Atlantic coastline. With the cooler temperatures, redfish, black drum, and speckled trout make their way to shallow waters, creating plenty of opportunity for inshore anglers. Nearby, rocky structures attract sheepshead, a favorite for kids.

Tybee Island offers more than just fishing with an iconic lighthouse, local seafood, and scenic beaches. Even in the heart of winter, the island retains its coastal energy, inviting tourists and anglers to spend the season there.

### RECOGNIZING COLLEEN LINDHOLZ

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colleen Lindholz, a fellow pharmacist and the president of Kroger Health, the healthcare division of the Kroger Company. This year, Ms. Lindholz is celebrating 30 years of service with the company.

After joining Kroger as a pharmacist for the Cincinnati-Dayton division in 1995, she quickly rose through the ranks to lead Kroger's more than 2,200 pharmacies and 220 retail clinic locations across 35 States, including 334 pharmacies and 18 clinics in Georgia.

Ms. Lindholz is the lead architect of the company's efforts to integrate pharmacy, clinician, and dietitian services into grocery offerings. She focuses on food as medicine, which Kroger Health defines as a dedicated, educated, and personalized approach to eating and enjoying food.

This initiative helps customers live healthier lives and prevents chronic diseases before they start.

In addition to her professional accomplishments on behalf of patient health, Ms. Lindholz is an active philanthropic leader. She gives back through leadership in many community organizations, including Easterseals Redwood, the American Heart Association-Greater Cincinnati, and the Joe Burrow Foundation, among others.

Mr. Speaker, from one pharmacist to another, I congratulate Ms. Lindholz on 30 years of bettering the health and well-being of Georgians and all Americans in the community Kroger serves.

### MASS SHOOTINGS

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

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, like many people on Sunday, I went to church. I went to church and prayed for the victims at my alma mater, Brown University.

Eleven kids were studying for their economics final exam and dreaming about going home to their families for the holidays when a gunman entered the room and started shooting. I prayed for the families and those who were shot and wounded, and I hope they all have a speedy recovery.

I also prayed for Mukhammad Aziz Umurzokov and Ella Cook, who both lost their lives to the unimaginable, senseless shooting. They were cherished members of the Brown community and had years of life and bright futures ahead of them. In one moment, it was all taken.

I prayed for them on Sunday, and I will continue to pray for them, but it is not enough. It will never be enough. We have a problem with gun violence and mass shootings in this country.

Twenty-six years ago, at Columbine High School in Colorado, 13 people were shot dead and 20 others injured. Thirteen years ago, at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut, 26 were fatally wounded. In 2018, 17 were killed and 18 were wounded at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.

These are just some of the more high-profile shootings over the last 26 years. There have been countless others at schools, movie theaters, parades, shopping centers, and even a concert in Las Vegas, where a family friend lost his daughter.

From 2000 to 2022, the United States has had over three times as many mass shootings as 16 other politically similar countries combined.

The one thing that has remained consistent during this time is that Congress has failed to act. Mass shooting after mass shooting, death after death, Congress has done nothing.

To my colleagues in Congress, I compel you to end this tragedy. As a practicing Catholic, I put my faith in God, but He is not going to solve this problem for us.

The prayers might make us feel good, but they are doing nothing to stop the scourge of gun violence threatening our communities. There is not going to be a miracle from Heaven that will end gun violence for us. We need to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: Where is the outrage from my Republican colleagues? The President was outraged over the shooting and death of American soldiers in Syria this weekend, and he should be. My sympathies are with those American heroes who gave their lives for our country fighting terrorists, but all Donald Trump had to say about the Brown University shooting was: "Things can happen."

□ 1015

Mr. Speaker, really? Now is the time for action. It is what the American