

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS SPIRIT IN SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

(Mr. BAUMGARTNER of Washington was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. BAUMGARTNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Christmas spirit in eastern Washington.

As a boy, I remember Christmastime in eastern Washington, sledding in my boyhood home of Colton, Washington, going on shopping trips with the family to Toys “R” Us in Spokane, and perhaps stopping off to go sledding in Manito Park or visiting Riverfront Park. Indeed, it is the best of America.

That spirit of Christmas continues in Spokane and in eastern Washington with its spirit of generosity and service. This year, Spokane has been selected as one of just 126 cities worldwide to host the Light the World Giving Machine, innovative vending machines in reverse that will allow families to purchase meals, warm clothing, hygiene items, or even chickens for neighbors in need here at home and around the globe.

From December 12 through January 12, visitors at Spokane Valley Mall can, with just a few taps, direct every dollar of their donations to trusted local charities like Second Harvest and global charities like CARE. This is eastern Washington at its best, people coming together to serve, to give, and to care for one another.

Since their launch in 2017, the Giving Machine initiative worldwide has helped raise tens of millions of dollars in donations, and now Spokane is part of that story of quiet, everyday kindness.

During this holiday season, eastern Washington is not just celebrating. It is stepping up to bless lives across our community and around the world. I am proud to represent a region that leads with generosity, and I encourage all who are able to visit the Light the World Giving Machine and to join in this spirit of giving.

CELEBRATING SPOKANE CHRISTMAS BUREAU

Mr. BAUMGARTNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Spokane Christmas Bureau and their 79th year of serving eastern Washington families and making each holiday season brighter.

Coordinated by Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, Volunteers of America, and The Spokesman-Review, the Christmas Bureau runs on the generosity of local donors and volunteers who give their time, talents, and treasures.

Through these community efforts, the bureau provides grocery vouchers to put food on the table and gather toys and books so children can experience the simple joy of a Christmas gift.

The Christmas Bureau serves folks in need throughout the greater Spokane area, including Adams, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Spokane, and Whitman Counties, making sure no child is forgotten and that no table is empty at Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, the Christmas Bureau reminds us what makes eastern Washington and the holidays so wonderful. It is neighbors stepping up for neighbors year after year.

SUPPORTING THE SALVATION ARMY

Mr. BAUMGARTNER. Mr. Speaker, over the last few weeks, many of us have walked past the familiar red kettles and heard the ringing bells of The Salvation Army outside our neighborhood grocery stores. Those kettles are just the tip of the iceberg of what The Salvation Army does for communities like mine in eastern Washington, not just at Christmas but all year long.

The donations collected outside of our local grocery stores are essential to funding key programs that serve our most vulnerable neighbors. In Spokane, The Salvation Army operates emergency foster care programs like Sally's House, providing safe and loving shelter for children removed from abusive or unsafe homes and giving them stability at one of the most traumatic moments in their young lives.

This holiday season, The Salvation Army in Spokane is leading toy drives across the greater Spokane area, collecting gifts so that hundreds of local children, who might otherwise go without, will wake up to a present under the tree.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that many of us in this Chamber have seen someone outside our neighborhood grocery store ringing a bell right next to a red kettle. When we all go home for the holidays, let us take a moment to thank The Salvation Army volunteers in our communities for raising money for programs like Sally's House and who are working every day to make our communities stronger.

ENACTING REAL CHANGE FOR GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, at this moment two families of Brown University students and 15 families in Sydney, Australia, are experiencing an anguish and heartbreak that is immeasurable, yet far too familiar.

Once again, we have seen hatred rear its ugly head in the form of gun violence, this time with 2 students murdered and 9 more injured at Brown, and 15 murdered and dozens injured in Sydney.

This comes on the heels of the 13th anniversary of the Sandy Hook shooting that took 26 victims, including 20 children.

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Last year, those 20 beautiful children who were violently taken from their families should have been graduating from high school. This year, they should have been coming home for the December break, seeing their childhood friends, and telling their parents about

all that they learned and experienced in college. Those are experiences that their families have been robbed of.

We, as a society, have been robbed of all that they may have accomplished throughout their lives: families that will never be formed, careers that will never be, memories that will never happen. The families of the victims of those two horrific shootings will experience that same agony year after year and decade after decade.

My own community of Buffalo knows it all too well. On May 14, 2022, a racist, white supremacist, terrorist gunman drove nearly 3 hours to our community, the City of Good Neighbors, and opened fire at the only full-service grocery store in a prominently Black neighborhood.

Mr. Speaker, 10 lives were callously and heartlessly stolen from us with three more, including the son of a dear friend of mine, critically injured. Our city will never be the same again.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can choose another path.

In New York State, we did just that. We ensured that military-grade body armor stays only in the hands of law enforcement and our Armed Forces. We implemented enhanced red flag laws and universal background checks. We raised the age to own firearms from 18 to 21, and we banned assault rifles.

We know these laws work in New York, and we know they work everywhere else, but they are severely weakened by the flow of guns across State borders due to the lack of Federal regulation.

In the United States, for far too long, some have treated gun violence as a part of life. My Democratic colleagues and I reject that. We refuse to accept a reality in which our schools, our houses of worship, our movie theaters, our grocery stores, our government offices, our workplaces, our parades, our malls, and our nightclubs are treated as if they haven't been the scenes of horrific, deadly attacks.

The time for action is now. I implore this body to join me in supporting the assault weapons ban; universal background checks; stronger red flag laws; ending gun trafficking across State lines; and, among others, my bill, the Lieutenant Aaron Salter, Jr., Responsible Body Armor Possession Act.

I beg my colleagues not to accept the status quo and to fight for a safer Nation. We can and should do so much better for our children and future generations.

I pray for the lives of those who were lost this past weekend. I pray that our country sees the light and enacts real, substantive change that will end the scourge of gun violence across our Nation.

RECOGNIZING FLORIDA TECH PANTHERS

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

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary achievement by a team who represents the very best of the space coast, our State, the Florida Tech Panthers, the 2025 NCAA Division II women's soccer national champions.

With a decisive 3-0 victory over Franklin Pierce, these student-athletes captured their first national title in program history. This championship was earned through discipline, teamwork, and an unwavering commitment to excellence—values that extend well beyond the soccer field.

I applaud the players, coaches, staff, and families who supported this team at every step of the way. Their hard work and leadership exemplify what college athletics is all about: strong competition, strong teammates, and future strong leaders.

Florida Tech Panthers made history and made our community proud. I congratulate our national champions.

Go Panthers.

RECOGNIZING AIR FORCE MASTER SERGEANT
JOHN "JAY" JOHNSON

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Brevard County's Veteran of the Month for December 2025, Master Sergeant John "Jay" Johnson of the United States Air Force.

Master Sergeant Johnson entered service in 1961 and spent 20 years defending our Nation, retiring at the distinguished rank of master sergeant. He served as a direction finding controller and Morse intercept operator, critical roles in intelligence and national security efforts during some of the most challenging times during the Cold War and the Vietnam war.

Nearly 12 of his 20 years of service was spent overseas, including assignments in Germany, Italy, Turkey, Japan, and the Philippines. His dedication and professionalism earned him numerous commendations, including the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, each a testament to his commitment to our Nation and his exceptional service to our Nation.

Master Sergeant Johnson embodies the very best of our Air Force and our country. We thank him for his unwavering commitment to duty and for his dedicated service for decades in defending freedom around the world and here at home.

FOCUSING ON REAL RESULTS

(Mr. VASQUEZ of New Mexico was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. VASQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with deep gratitude—gratitude to the people of New Mexico who have placed their trust in me and gratitude for all of those who have worked with me this past year, both Democrats and Republicans, who have helped me deliver real results for folks back home.

My district is one of the largest districts in the country, larger than the State of Pennsylvania, and includes major cities, border towns, Tribal communities, and rural counties that often feel forgotten by Washington.

New Mexico's Second District embodies the American spirit. We are a diverse people who get up every day, work a hard day's job, and take pride in our families and the work that we do.

This year, I set out with one simple goal: focus on the people in our district and do good by the families who call New Mexico home, regardless of their party affiliation. That is why, at a time when Washington has been paralyzed by partisan gridlock and way too much drama, my focus has remained on common sense and delivering real results.

The good people of New Mexico elected me to do a job, and I intend to do it; not with red or blue solutions, but practical solutions that are rooted in the real lives of the people who I represent.

Across southern New Mexico, we have seen that wildfire season is no longer seasonal. It is a constant threat. We have seen the State's two largest wildfires ravage communities and displace generations of folks from their homes.

I worked with my colleagues on both sides to pass a bipartisan bill that strengthens our ability to fight fires in remote and rural areas. My Aerial Firefighting Enhancement Act ensures that our communities and firefighters have more resources to protect lives, homes, and livelihoods when it counts most.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about feeling forgotten, sometimes it is our rural communities that feel the most left out—places where Federal support can make the difference between a school being able to stay open, between having a graded road or one that is washboarded and crumbling, and between having lifesaving care that can reach your home in time.

That is why I successfully led a bipartisan push to restore \$9 million and secure rural school funding for New Mexico's rural schools and our infrastructure, delivering much-needed resources to places like Catron, Grant, Sierra, and Cibola Counties.

Staying focused on common sense also meant listening to our military families at White Sands Missile Range and Holloman Air Force Base. When they told me they were going without care because of the enormously long distances that it took to get to a hospital or to a clinic, I worked on a bipartisan bill that is now law, which expands travel reimbursement under TRICARE so that servicemembers and their loved ones aren't forced to shoulder the unnecessary costs just to get the care that they need.

Serving in New Mexico isn't just about passing bills here. It is about showing up when people need you. This

year, my team and I resolved over 650 constituent cases, cutting through red tape, standing up to bureaucracy, and returning nearly \$4.5 million to our taxpayers who were rightfully owed that money. For families waiting on Social Security, veterans navigating the VA, or seniors dealing with the IRS, that help was immediate and personal.

I have traveled over 5,000 miles on the road in my district this year. From talking to students in Deming, meeting with Tribal leaders in Zuni Pueblo, hosting a carne asada with oil workers in Carlsbad, and convening roundtables with police departments in Albuquerque, this is a big district with many needs, and advocacy doesn't just start at the Capitol steps.

Mr. Speaker, 2025 was also a big year in the fight to protect our public lands. When extreme proposals threatened to sell off millions of acres of our public lands, I founded the first-ever Bipartisan Public Lands Caucus to keep those lands public for hunters, ranchers, families, and future generations who deserve to keep this unique American birthright. Public lands are one of our Nation's best ideas, and I intend to keep it that way.

I have also worked hard to secure Federal investments across New Mexico, from addressing homelessness to investing in workplace training, to launching a new express bus service connecting Las Cruces to El Paso. I showed up, listened to what folks needed, and we got to work. These are smart investments that strengthen local economies and improve the daily lives of New Mexicans.

Lastly, my focus on bringing common sense to Washington is why I recently introduced the new plan for immigration this year. As someone who was raised on both sides of the border and represents 180 miles of that border today, I know that border security is more complex than just building a wall. I know that both parties have often gotten it wrong.

We need an immigration system that reflects our American values, and that makes smart investments in security and more legal pathways that strengthen our economy rather than undermine it.

I want to be clear about something: I don't work for either party. I work for the people of New Mexico, every single one of them, whether they voted for me or not. I am proud of what we have accomplished this year, but more than that, I am proud of how we accomplished it: by choosing collaboration over conflict.

Mr. Speaker, "thank you"; "gracias" to the people of New Mexico for sending me here. I will continue showing up, fighting for them, and doing the work they sent me here to do.