

protecting our community's most vulnerable.

In addition to his law enforcement career, Detective Gachett is an ordained minister and a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. He is also a loving husband, father, and grandfather.

No one deserves retirement more than Jerry, but I know that he won't be retiring for real, as he has been sworn into the APD Reserves. I am sure we will continue to see him serving our community in his own special way.

On behalf of Ohio's 13th Congressional District, I congratulate and thank Detective Jerry Gachett on a storied career at the Akron Police Department and for over 31 years of outstanding service and devotion to our community and our country.

CELEBRATING EVA AND HERB PORTER AS COMMUNITY PILLARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as we celebrate Black History Month to uplift two of my constituents and pillars of the Hanover Park community, Eva and Herb Porter. Both have shared more than 40 years of love, leadership, and unwavering dedication to civic engagement.

Eva Porter is a beloved retired educator in our community. After 30 years of teaching, she has continued to shape young minds in and beyond the classroom.

Eva has served as a trustee of the Poplar Creek Library Board and as a board member for school district U-46. Her passion for service shines through her volunteer work with organizations like Kids Hope USA and the American Cancer Society.

Eva's passion and commitment to public service is matched only by her dear husband, Herb. Currently serving as a deputy mayor of Hanover Park, Herb Porter became the first-ever African-American Hanover Park trustee when he was elected in 2019. With nearly a decade of elected office, Herb is currently the longest serving African-American public official in the north-west suburban area.

He continues to serve his community in his roles on the governing board for the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County as well as the board of the Alignment Collaborative for Education.

□ 1045

Proud members of the DuPage NAACP, Eva and Herb Porter's legacy of service and uplifting diversity and equity have inspired countless community members to get involved in civic engagement, including their daughter, Dr. Chantelle Porter, who was just elected in 2022 as the first Black female judge in DuPage County.

While we think of being first and only, we know we still have a long way

to go to truly have parity and representation across this country, but the Porter family's extensive service to the Hanover Park community is a reminder of just how seriously our local communities take our responsibility to serve our neighbors and to do so with compassion and care.

Today, I rise to speak of their leadership, dedication, and exemplary service, which serves as a reminder to each of us here in Congress that we also have the very same responsibility to care for our neighbors and our working families, not special interests and unaccountable billionaires.

As we take the time to celebrate history, we are also reminded that we are making history every single day in these Chambers and back home in our districts. Let it be good history. Let it be history that we are proud of.

Our constituents, including Herb and Eva, are meeting this moment with the urgency it deserves, and they rightfully expect us to follow their lead. I know I will.

On behalf of Illinois' Third Congressional District on this 25th day of February, 2025, I commend Eva and Herb Porter for their lifelong commitment to modeling civic responsibility, community service, and courageous leadership.

Congratulations to Eva and Herb.

PROTECTING VETERANS IS NOT GOVERNMENT WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. HERNÁNDEZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, during the past weeks, the Federal Government has been cruel to its workforce. It has offered deferred resignations. It has laid off employees. It has sent employees confusing information.

As Jorge Santiago-Rivera, a labor leader from the Department of Veterans Affairs on the island, has said: The truth is that, yes, we live under fear. We live under uncertainty.

I worry about the well-being of our Federal workers. I worry, in particular, about the well-being of the 13,000 Federal employees who reside in Puerto Rico, but I also worry about the thousands of veterans who rely on the VA for their healthcare needs in Puerto Rico. Why? Because the lack of structure and logic behind these cuts directly affects them.

As Mr. Santiago asks: If you lose 10 emergency workers from the ER, who helps the patients?

Unsurprisingly, the VA is now scrambling to deny deferred resignation requests. In the past, it has had to rehire workers that it laid off.

The VA is not the only Federal agency on the island affected by this chaotic, irresponsible, negligent program of Federal cuts. The IRS reportedly laid off around 200 workers. The National Park Service, the USDA, and the national Forest Service are also laying off employees.

Brenda Reyes Tomassini, a labor leader from the EPA, another agency affected, described it best: It is devastating, truly, a brutal level of anxiety.

What makes this even worse is the process. Some of these employees have worked for the Federal Government for 15 or 20 years. They transferred to new positions, so they appeared as if they were on probation and have been terminated. That is unacceptable.

Members of this Congress have not received accurate information about what is happening. I will be the first one to acknowledge that government waste exists. It exists at the Federal level, the State level, and the municipal level, but protecting our veterans is not government waste. Protecting our national parks and protecting our national forests, like El Yunque, is not government waste. Protecting the employees who work hard to ensure that millionaires and billionaires don't cheat on their taxes is not government waste. It is what government is for.

In the coming days, my office will be taking action. We will share resources for Federal employees so that they know their rights. We will host a tele-townhall to hear directly from affected workers. We will demand transparency from the agencies responsible for these layoffs.

I also urge the Government of Puerto Rico to step up to provide these workers the assistance that the government of Puerto Rico usually provides to workers who are laid off in the tourism or manufacturing sectors.

To the workers affected, I send a clear message: I know that being laid off is painful. It hurts your finances. It hurts your stability. It can even hurt your sense of self-worth, but let's be clear: You are not the problem. Your government is the problem. I see you, hear you, and will fight for you.

HONORING GEORGE WALTON WELLER

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

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor an extraordinary American, a true hero in every sense, George Walton Weller.

For 65 years, Mr. Weller has dedicated his life to the safety and well-being of his community through the Verona Volunteer Fire Company. Helping to found the fire company in 1959, he remains an active member to this day at age 91. His unwavering commitment to service and deep sense of duty are nothing short of inspiring.

Long before he answered the call as a firefighter, Mr. Weller bravely served our Nation as a member of the United States Air Force. Serving for 4 years during the Vietnam war, he defended the freedoms we hold dear.

Mr. Weller has strengthened his community in the generations of firefighters he has mentored and his example of dedication. Few can claim such a

legacy, and today, I recognize and thank George Walton Weller for his extraordinary contributions and selfless acts of service.

Mr. Speaker, he embodies the very best of America, and we are forever indebted to him.

CELEBRATING SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 150th anniversary of Shenandoah University, a proud institution in historic Winchester, Virginia, that has shaped minds and transformed lives for a century and a half.

Founded on February 12, 1875, in Dayton, Virginia, Shenandoah took a bold step back in 1960, relocating 75 miles north to Winchester and paving the way for its continued growth and success.

For 150 years, Shenandoah University has remained steadfast in its mission to provide innovative, high-quality, and student-focused education, always keeping the community at its heart.

The university's legacy has been shaped by visionary leaders, from A.P. Funkhouser, its founder, to Dr. Forrest Racey, who led its relocation, and Dr. James Davis, under whose leadership it became a university. Today, that tradition of excellence continues under Dr. Tracy Fitzsimmons, Shenandoah's first female president, who has guided its remarkable growth.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Shenandoah University on this historic milestone and wishing it continued success for generations to come.

RECOGNIZING CONCERN HOTLINE

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Concern Hotline, a vital organization that has provided compassionate, lifesaving support to the residents of the northern Shenandoah Valley for the past 57 years.

Founded in 1970 in response to a tragic rise in suicides, Concern Hotline has been a constant source of hope, offering 24/7 crisis intervention and emotional support. This organization is led by Executive Director Rusty Holland, who has dedicated himself to ensuring that anyone in crisis has a trained, nonjudgmental listener ready to take the call.

The organization thrives because of its dedicated volunteers and community partnerships with first responders, mental health providers, and local universities. Their work has saved countless lives, and their mission is simple but powerful: to keep people safe for now.

I commend Concern Hotline for its unwavering commitment to suicide prevention and crisis intervention. The northern Shenandoah Valley is stronger because of their work, and I wish them continued success in their mission.

DEFENDING CONSUMER CHOICE

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to stand against yet another blatant government overreach—this time an

attack by the Biden administration on the ability of hardworking Americans to choose the appliances that best fit their needs.

In his final days, President Biden's Department of Energy finalized a rule that effectively bans certain natural gas water heaters from the market. This unnecessary regulation is yet another example of the left pushing a radical Green New Deal agenda at the expense of American families.

This rule would drive up costs, limit consumer choice, and hurt American families and small businesses. It is the same heavyhanded approach we saw time and again from the previous administration, forcing Americans to buy expensive, inefficient alternatives instead of letting them decide what works best for their homes and businesses.

The DOE has no business dictating what kind of water heater Americans can use, and that is why I strongly support H.J. Res. 20, introduced by my colleague Congressman GARY PALMER. This resolution sends a clear message: Washington bureaucrats do not get to make these choices for the American people.

House Republicans will continue fighting to protect consumer freedom and keep government overreach out of our homes. I urge my colleagues to stand with the American people and pass this important resolution.

MARKING THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF UNPROVOKED RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGS of South Carolina). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. VINDMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. VINDMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the House as we have just marked the third anniversary of the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine.

February 24, 2022, the date of the largest land grab in Europe since World War II, joins an ignominious list of others as a day of infamy, but this month, it is also notorious for something else.

In this month and this year, the Pax Americana, the rules-based international order established in the aftermath of World War II, an order that has delivered peace and prosperity to the United States, has been brought to a dishonorable end.

In this month, Trump ordered the U.S. Representative to the U.N. to vote with autocrats and against democracy.

Pete Hegseth, the FOX weekend television host improbably elevated into an American Secretary of Defense, announced that NATO membership for Ukraine was off the table. Going further, he suggested that Ukraine's return to its 2014 borders was no longer in the cards. Hegseth thereby deprived Ukraine and the West of two of their most valuable bargaining chips in determining the shape of any peace agreement that is to come.

In this same month, Donald Trump, the President of the United States, standing facts on their head, called Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the leader of Ukrainian democracy, an unelected "dictator," and incredibly, spewing another blatant falsehood, blamed Ukraine for starting the war.

In this month, in perhaps the most shameful statement from an American President in the history of our Republic, Trump explained that because Russia had lost so many soldiers, it was entitled to keep some or all of the territory that it had seized in its unprovoked war of aggression.

It is bad enough that these are lies and betrayals of America's great traditions.

It is bad enough that these statements legitimize violations of the fundamental principles of Pax Americana and the U.N. Charter. Namely, the rules of the jungle no longer apply to international relations—that might does not make right and that powerful nations cannot employ force to redraw international borders at will.

It is bad enough that the Trump administration is failing to offer a strong bargaining position for Ukraine from which to negotiate a just peace.

It is bad enough that his statements have sent an unmistakable message to the world, in particular, Communist China, that aggression pays.

Things are even worse than all of that.

Under the tutelage of Donald Trump, we are witnessing a fundamental transformation of American foreign policy from a force for good in the world to a force for evil. Trump is aligning American foreign policy with that of the Kremlin.

As analyst Phillips O'Brien has put it: "The USA is now run by gangsters who both want to ally with other gangsters and are using threats of destruction and violence to get their way."

□ 1100

In the first term, there were guardrails because there were adults in the room. This time there are no such adults in the room. Trump has surrounded himself with sycophants, yes-men, third-rate fanatics, and clowns from the MAGA world. The guardrails are gone. Trump is free to follow his peculiar whims and unhinged instincts. Indeed, he is free to act as would a mad king.

The results are plain to see. The results are visible in Trump's repeated attacks on Denmark for refusing to sell Greenland to the United States, another dangerous fantasy which is roiling relations with a NATO ally that has been an exceptionally loyal friend in times of need.

They are visible in the trade war that Trump is promising to unleash on Mexico, Canada, Europe, and the entire world with untold consequences for prosperity everywhere, including here at home.

They are most visible in the collapse of our friendship with Ukraine, our