

troubling that is happening to one of the most treasured cultural institutions in our country, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Yes, it is the John F. Kennedy Center.

Over the weekend, the President announced on Truth Social, of course, that he intends to shut down the Kennedy Center for approximately 2 years for so-called renovations. Since then, he has talked about leaving the building's steel fully exposed, raising questions about whether this is a renovation at all or something far more drastic.

Let's take a step back. The Kennedy Center is not a private real estate project. It is not a campaign prop. It is not a vanity playground for demolition. It is a national cultural institution, created by Congress in 1958, and later dedicated to President John F. Kennedy after his death. It opened in 1971 as a living memorial to a man who believed the arts were essential to democracy itself. The name, the mission, the existence all come from statute, law. No social media post, no board reshuffle, and no personal declaration has the legal authority to change that.

For more than 50 years, the Kennedy Center has been a place where Americans of every background could come together to experience excellence in music, theater, dance, and culture. It was built to foster national unity, artistic expression, and America's creative spirit, not to feed the ego of a single individual.

Unfortunately, over the past year, we have watched the systematic takeover, with board members fired, loyalists installed, programming politicized, and artists walking away in droves. The consequences were immediate.

Though Donald Trump's hand-picked leadership has been suspiciously tight-lipped about the Center's finances, they reportedly oversaw an 82 percent decline in theater subscriptions, a 57 percent drop in ballet packages, and a \$1.6 million loss in ticket sales in just a matter of months.

The decline was not because the building had suddenly become dangerous. It is because artists and audiences rejected what the Kennedy Center has been becoming. Now, rather than reverse course, the President's solution is to close it for 2 years?

According to reporting this week, many board members, staff, performers, and even Trump-appointed officials were blindsided by this announcement. There was no plan presented, no consultation, no transparency.

The New York Times reports that budget documents describe needed maintenance, yes, but nothing that required shutting down the entire institution. In fact, the very official overseeing facilities said that just 2 months ago, there were no serious discussions about closing the Center.

What changed? What changed is that the Center could no longer sustain programming. Artists were pulling out,

performances were being canceled, ticket sales were collapsing. With every bad story detailing what the Center has become under President Trump's control, the more of a headache and source of embarrassment it became for the President.

Now this renovation begins to look less like infrastructure work and more like a cover story for institutional failure.

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As the top Democrat of the Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the Kennedy Center's funding, I can tell you this: We have repeatedly asked for financial information, for meetings, for transparency about what is happening inside the center. Our requests have been ignored.

That should alarm every Member of this body because this is not just about a building. It is about whether Congress is going to allow a President to seize control of a congressionally created institution, run it into the ground, and then unilaterally shut it down without oversight.

Sadly, this is part of a much broader pattern. We have seen this administration's attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts, their attacks on the National Endowment for the Humanities, their interference in museums, including the Smithsonian, their political litmus tests for cultural programming, and now the attempted transformation of the Kennedy Center into a monument to one man's personal brand.

The Kennedy Center is the only memorial in Washington dedicated to President John F. Kennedy, a President who believed that art belonged to the American people, a President who believed culture was a public good. This takeover, and the incompetence that has come with it, is an insult to that legacy.

The law is very clear: The Kennedy Center's name and mission are established by statute. Changing that requires an act of Congress, and I will do everything in my power to make sure this institution stays the way it is.

CONFRONTING THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION

(Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend President Trump for taking decisive action to confront one of the most devastating public health challenges that currently face our Nation, the disease of addiction.

With the launch of the Great American Recovery Initiative, President Trump is elevating our national response by coordinating Federal, State, and community resources. This action by President Trump will expand access to treatment, to prevention, to long-term recovery, and support millions of Americans and their families.

This initiative recognizes what addiction truly is, a chronic, treatable condition. This comprehensive effort reflects a shared American value that every life is worth saving and every individual struggling with addiction deserves a path to recovery.

According to data collected in 2023, nearly 5,000 Pennsylvanians lost their lives due to fatal drug overdoses. That means that across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we lost 14 lives each day to addiction.

Under the leadership of President Trump, I look forward to working with my colleagues here in Congress to support this initiative and ensure that it delivers real results for the families and those suffering with addiction across our country.

HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY TO SISTER PAULA DELGROSSO

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th birthday of Sister Paula DelGrosso.

Sister Paula's religious vocation began in the 1950s. After spending more than 30 years in education, she heard a different calling, a calling to serve her community in another way. She worked to establish the St. Vincent de Paul's Food for Families Soup Kitchen.

Sister Paula has worked with community leaders, service organizations, and supporters to operate the soup kitchen. Now, for more than three decades, she has lived her faith by feeding the hungry.

Mr. Speaker, as one of Sister Paula's many volunteers, I witnessed firsthand her commitment and her passion to serving her community. On her 90th birthday, I thank Sister Paula for her dedication and her devotion for those in need. I wish Sister Paula a happy birthday.

HONORING GEORGE LAKE

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor George Lake of Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, as the first recipient of the Pennsylvania Veteran Ag Entrepreneurship Award.

After completing his service in the U.S. Marine Corps, George took the responsibility of owning the Thistle Creek Farms in Warriors Mark.

George has transformed his family's 600-acre farm into a nationally recognized regenerative livestock operation which produces a premium beef brand.

Motivated to help owners of small farms succeed, George also devotes time to mentoring fellow beef farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I thank George Lake for his military service and offer congratulations on receiving the Pennsylvania Veteran Ag Entrepreneurship Award.

RECOGNIZING THE DEGOL FAMILY FOUNDATION

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th anniversary of the DeGol Organization, which is headquartered in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

The origins of the family-owned and -operated enterprise date to 1950 when

Bruno and Lena DeGol produced a masonry plant in Cambria County.

Today, the DeGol Organization includes Seven D Wholesale, DeGol Carpet, Seven D Windows and Door, Hollidaysburg Rail Car Services, and the Scotch Valley Country Club.

In addition to driving economic growth and facilitating job creation, the DeGol Organization has supported communities through the Bruno and Lena DeGol Family Foundation. The foundation's philanthropy has funded numerous capital improvement projects, education initiatives, and nonprofit programs.

Mr. Speaker, with a distinguished legacy of leadership, I congratulate the entire DeGol family on this milestone anniversary and offer best wishes for continued success.

IT IS TIME FOR THE CORRUPTION TO END

(Mr. NEGUSE of Colorado was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. NEGUSE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to sound an alarm, to sound an alarm about something dangerous and dark and pernicious that is happening inside our government. I recognize there are only a handful of my colleagues in the Chamber to hear that alarm and a few folks in the gallery, but I pray that Americans writ large will hear it.

George Orwell in his famous book "1984" wrote of a time when "The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command." His warning proved pressing because today the Trump administration asks the American people to ignore what they see with their own eyes and what they hear with their own ears, which is the complete corruption of their government from the inside out.

The Trump administration's pay-to-play schemes are literally ripping off hardworking American taxpayers as we speak. We see the evidence everywhere: A \$10 billion payout that Donald Trump, the President of the United States of America, now demands from his own Treasury Department in a lawsuit that he filed against the IRS.

By the way, who does he demand pay him this \$10 billion? The American taxpayer. The countless pay-to-play schemes and vanity projects that have consumed his administration, all paid by American taxpayers, are stripping the pocketbooks of Americans to line their own.

Last weekend, The New Yorker reported that the President and his family have raked in \$4 billion in personal profits by leveraging the Presidency. Let's think about that, \$4 billion.

The most salient example of this, by the way, we just learned about in the last 7 days. It was an expose by The Wall Street Journal about a scheme that the Trump administration engaged in last year.

The Trump family, according to these public reports, sold a 49 percent stake in their crypto company to a member of the Emirati royal family. They did so for nearly half a billion dollars.

We don't know every detail of this transaction. We do know that the Trump family received \$187 million from that transaction, a payday entangling the President's financial interests with a foreign country.

Months later, we know that the Trump administration approved a crypto deal with the UAE that included transferring advanced U.S. technology and AI chips.

Mr. Speaker, this is corruption, plain and simple.

It is the prioritization of personal profit over the national security interests of our country, the country we all love so dearly.

It is wrong. It is immoral, and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say nothing. Worse, some of them defend this conduct, notwithstanding that they know it is unlawful, that it is violative of our Constitution.

We have an Emoluments Clause, Mr. Speaker, for a reason. The Foreign Emoluments Clause was one of the few provisions to survive and be transferred from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution in 1787. It was contemplated for precisely a scenario as this one.

George Mason, one of our Founding Fathers during the Constitutional Convention, warned his fellow delegates that "if we do not provide against corruption, our government will soon be at an end." His words are as true today as they were when he said them 240 some-odd years ago.

It is shameful the lack of courage from my Republican colleagues. It is repugnant to the constitutional order that we all have been sworn to defend, to protect, and to vindicate.

The question I have, Mr. Speaker, for my Republican colleagues and for every American of good faith is: When is enough enough? How many sweetheart deals will Republicans refuse to condemn?

The corruption must end, Mr. Speaker. The corruption must end.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). The Chair reminds Members not to refer to persons in the gallery.

HAPPY 106TH BIRTHDAY TO HAZEL WOMBLE

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

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let's go back to the year 1919. We had just 48 States. World War I had just ended but we called it the Great War because we didn't know there was going to be another. Charlie Chaplin had just released a short silent film called "Sunnyside," before talking pictures would be all the rage. In this very Chamber, the House voted to send the 19th Amendment, giving women the

right to vote, to the States for ratification.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 106th birthday of someone born that year, an American hero named Hazel Womble of Jacksonville, Florida, who is today one of our Nation's oldest living veterans. Here she is surrounded by friends and family.

Born on Christmas Eve in 1919, Hazel would go on to serve her country with extraordinary courage in World War II. Hazel enlisted in the Navy Reserves and served as an operating room nurse at U.S. naval hospitals from Portsmouth to Newport and even overseas in Bermuda.

In the darkest days of the war, she answered her country's call with the steady hands and a nurse's calm demeanor, holding the line not with a rifle but with a lifesaving skill and unwavering resolve.

She earned the World War II Victory Medal and the American Theater Ribbon, continuing her service to our Nation until her medical discharge in 1953.

At 106 years young, Hazel is not a page in our history book. She is a living chapter of American courage. Her life reflects a generation shaped by sacrifice, strengthened by service, and sustained by quiet resolve.

Mr. Speaker, we honor Hazel Womble not only for the years she has lived but the example she has set. Today, we celebrate an American who continues to inspire us all more than a century after her journey began. America is very proud of her.

Wishing Hazel a happy 106th birthday.

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STOPPING UNREGULATED BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a serious and growing public safety and public health concern that I think requires congressional action. It is the operation of illegal and unregulated biological laboratories that we see in communities throughout our country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting legislation that I have introduced from the House committee recommendations. They are the Preventing Illegal Laboratories and Protecting Public Health Act and the STOP Health Threats Act.

Many of us became aware of this issue in the San Joaquin Valley in 2023 when an illegal biolab was discovered operating in my district in Reedley, California. Local officials uncovered a clandestine operation storing biological materials, laboratory equipment, medical waste, and dangerous, dangerous pathogens like malaria, like COVID, like HIV. There were thousands of laboratory mice in unsafe conditions.