

RECOGNIZING MEDAL OF HONOR
RECIPIENT MICHAEL OLLIS

(Ms. MALLIOTAKIS of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Madam Speaker, this past Monday, I joined President Trump at the White House as he posthumously awarded United States Army Staff Sergeant Michael Ollis of Staten Island, New York, the Medal of Honor, the Nation's highest military honor that can be bestowed.

Madam Speaker, I rise to share the bravery exhibited by my district's hometown hero.

On August 28, 2013, Staff Sergeant Ollis gave his life weeks before his 25th birthday. He gave his life to save an allied soldier during a Taliban raid on Forward Operating Base Ghazni in Afghanistan, after a truck carrying 3,000 pounds of explosives slammed into the base and terrorists advanced.

Without wearing any armor, Staff Sergeant Ollis fired back, then chose selflessness and placed himself between a suicide bomber and a fellow allied soldier.

He did not pause. He did not stop to calculate. He acted, knowing that the cost would be his life, but he chose to save the life of a NATO ally, Polish Second Lieutenant Karol Cierpica.

Michael's courage, selflessness, and sacrifice represent the very best of our Nation, earning him the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross, as well as the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, the highest Polish decoration for a foreigner.

On Staten Island, we are so proud of Michael. We have a ferry named after him. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9587 is also named for Michael. The Michael Ollis Freedom Foundation supports veterans and students in his memory, continuing his legacy of service to others.

Yet, the Medal of Honor, a statement of national memory, tells the entire world and future generations of the courage, patriotism, sacrifice, and service exhibited by Michael Ollis. These are all values that the United States holds sacred.

His final act requires no embellishment or argument. It stands on its own, resolute and selfless, and is worthy of the highest military recognition that our country can bestow.

We are grateful to President Donald Trump for recognizing Staff Sergeant Ollis' extraordinary heroism.

Today, I add this tribute to the official CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. We congratulate his family, especially his parents, Bob and Linda, who accepted the honor, and the entire Staten Island community, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the ultimate sacrifice made by our hometown hero, Michael Ollis, received the recognition that it deserves.

Staff Sergeant Ollis may no longer be with us physically, but he lives on in our hearts and in our minds. His valor

and devotion to our Nation and his fellow soldiers will never be forgotten by our proud community and by our grateful Nation.

FOOD IS NATIONAL SECURITY

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, before I make my comments on a very important issue facing our country, let us all pause for a moment to recognize those six Americans who have lost their lives this week and their families, realizing that they have given their all. God bless them, and our thoughts and prayers are with their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about something that touches every family, as well, and every community, and that is hunger. Food, as I always say in the House Agriculture Committee, of which I am a member, is a national security issue. Food is a national security issue. Yet, we too often fail to treat it that way.

When families cannot access healthy, affordable food, our communities are weaker, our economy is weaker, and our Nation is weaker.

If we are forced to import essential foods rather than grow them here in America, that leaves our Nation more vulnerable in an increasingly unstable world that we live in today.

In our San Joaquin Valley, which I represent, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the country, farmers rise early in the morning to put food on America's dinner table. I know. I am a third-generation farmer and proud of it.

California produces over 400 commodities, including more than 60 percent of the Nation's fruits and vegetables. Over 80 percent of the citrus in the Nation is produced in California, along with 75 percent of the world's almonds and pistachios. Think about that: 75 percent in California.

Yet, even communities that grow so much of our food, like in my district, nearly 30 percent of the households rely on food assistance. It is an interesting dichotomy. We have incredible food production that puts food on every American's dinner table every night with the help of farmworkers, yet a majority of those households, 30 percent of them in my district, require food assistance. It is sad. They depend upon food support for their food.

Nationwide, 48 million people face food insecurity in our country, including 14 million children—14 million children—in the richest Nation in the world. This is unacceptable. At the same time, we know that grocery costs are up by as much as \$400 a month for so many of our families throughout the country.

Egg prices rose 53 percent over the year from January 2024 to January 2025.

In 2025, a gallon of whole milk averaged \$4.

Ground beef prices have risen 15 percent recently and are up 63 percent since 2020.

Americans who purchase their groceries every week know that the affordability of their food continues to become more challenging and more difficult.

Last year, the United States Department of Agriculture canceled—canceled—\$1 billion in funding that schools and local food banks use to purchase food directly from local farmers. It was a great program and had a lot of merit. Why they canceled it, I do not know.

Congress also enacted cuts totaling \$186 billion in food assistance that resulted in more than 3 million people losing their food support entirely. That is disgraceful.

Soon after, the United States Department of Agriculture terminated the annual Household Food Security report, the very report that told us that nearly 48 million Americans face food insecurity. What is that about? Without reliable data, we are left without a clear picture on who is struggling the most in our communities throughout our country.

This week, the House marked up the farm bill, an important effort that we are supposed to do every 4 years. We are now into 5.5 years. We tried to strengthen the nutrition programs through amendments and legislation, but the Republicans defeated our efforts, sadly.

We must stabilize farm income, or we will allow our producers to fall behind. Whether we invest in local food systems or just let them disappear, food is a national security issue. The farm bill affects grocery prices, crop insurance, school lunches, and rural economies.

Mr. Speaker, we must pass a bipartisan farm bill this year, and I am doing everything I can by working with my colleagues across the aisle and the Senate because food is a national security issue. That is the bottom line.

In the Central Valley that I represent, the San Joaquin Valley, families are spending over \$1,000 a month on groceries. The affordability question is real.

Farmers are navigating misguided tariffs policy, volatile markets, and disease outbreaks. In the richest country in the world, we should not accept a system where the hardest-working farmers see shrinking margins while families struggle to afford their groceries.

Let's support our farmers. Let's feed our families. Let's feed our children.

HONORING ROBERT "BOB" BACKON

(Mr. BERGMAN of Michigan was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life and legacy of a truly remarkable man, my cousin, my friend, and a true pillar of his community, Robert "Bob" Backon.

Bob passed away on February 15 at the age of 83, leaving behind a legacy defined by service to his family, his students, and the community that he loved so deeply.

Life and tomorrow are never guaranteed. Little did any of us realize when I met with Steve, his son; Steve's wife, Leigh; and his granddaughter, Charleigh, about 10 days ago to think about the planning of Bob's memorial service, that today I would be extending condolences to Steve and Charleigh on the passing of Leigh, unexpectedly last Sunday. Again, life and tomorrow are never guaranteed. The only thing that is guaranteed is God's love and God's forgiveness.

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Born in Highland Park, Michigan, and raised in Ironwood, Bob devoted his life to learning and to helping others succeed. After earning his bachelor's degree from Northland College and a master's in education from Northern Michigan University, he moved to Houghton, Michigan, in 1967. For the next 35 years, he taught U.S. history and government at Houghton High School, shaping the minds and the character of generations of young people.

To many of his students, he was simply "Mr. B." To the community, he was much more than a teacher. Bob was a mentor, a coach, and someone who believed deeply in investing in young people. He coached basketball and golf. Even after his coaching days ended, he stayed involved in athletics as a referee, bringing fairness, enthusiasm, and integrity to every game he worked. He was that kind of referee on the basketball court who celebrated the players of both teams on a shot well played and sometimes would chastise them a little bit for them being on the outside edges of the rules.

In fact, he told me a story. One time he said to his class in the beginning of November: You know November 15 here in northern Michigan is not a holiday. Just because it is the opening of deer season doesn't mean you get a day off of school. However, if a few days after November 15 there is some fresh venison on my desk, your grades won't suffer.

That was the kind of guy Bob was when it came to engaging his students and celebrating life as it was meant to be for these young high schoolers.

Bob believed that service with the community didn't stop at the classroom door. In 1990, he stepped into public service, first on the Houghton Planning Commission and later on the Houghton City Council. In 2008, he was elected mayor of Houghton, a position he held with pride and dedication for more than a decade.

Those who worked with him often described Bob as the kind of leader who brought people together. He led with kindness, wisdom, and an optimism that made others believe in the future of their town. He was the kind of per-

son who knew everyone, encouraged everyone, and celebrated every success, big or small.

To our family, Bob was something even more important. He was a steady presence, someone who cared deeply about the people around him. He faced life's hardships with strength and grace, carrying forward with the same generosity of spirit that defined him.

Bob loved his family, and one of his greatest joys was being a grandfather. He took pride in watching that next generation grow, just as he had taken pride in helping generations of students find their way. As his granddaughter, Charleigh, heads off to Miami of Ohio this fall, I know she is going to take the memories of her grandfather with her and celebrate that every day.

Mr. Speaker, communities across this country are built by people like Bob Backon, people who quietly dedicate their lives to others: teachers who inspire, coaches who mentor, local leaders who step forward, not for recognition, but because they care deeply about the place that they call home.

Bob embodied the very best of Michigan's Upper Peninsula: hard work, humility, kindness, and an unwavering commitment to community.

His impact will live on in the countless students he taught, the athletes he coached, the city he helped lead, and the many people whose lives were better simply because they knew him.

Whenever you hear the song "Sweet Caroline," you think about Bob humming that somewhere and leading the chorus. That was his song, and I am sure he is still singing it up in heaven.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FONG). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BERGMAN. I will always be proud to call him my cousin and friend. May his memory be a blessing and an inspiration to all who knew him.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EPSTEIN FILES

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about the investigation and horrific crimes of Jeffrey Epstein.

Last Friday, I attended President Clinton's deposition in New York. This deposition raised even more questions about President Trump's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein.

Let me explain why. First off, of course, President Clinton said that President Trump flew on the plane; but not just that, President Clinton also recounted a conversation he had with President Trump about Jeffrey Epstein on a golf course in New York in the early 2000s. He said that President Trump had told him that the reason him and Jeffrey Epstein had a falling out had to do with a real estate land dispute.

This directly contradicts information that President Trump has stated in the

past. He has claimed that their falling out was over spa workers at Mar-a-Lago.

We also know his own Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick, is in the files, as well. Despite this, the President contends that he doesn't know anything about Jeffrey Epstein's crimes. The question is: If you don't know anything about the crimes, how do you know that Howard Lutnick is innocent, as the President has stated multiple times.

I also have unanswered questions about President Trump's Mar-a-Lago club. President Trump himself said that Jeffrey Epstein stole many of the women who worked at the spa in Mar-a-Lago.

I made a motion in the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to subpoena documents related to Jeffrey Epstein and Mar-a-Lago. No Republican on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform supported my motion.

Republicans on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform wanted to spend our time talking to Secretary Hillary Clinton. If we are calling spouses before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, why haven't we talked to Melania Trump about what she knows?

There are still many questions that need to be answered. I am proud that yesterday the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform issued a subpoena to Pam Bondi. We will hold her accountable for what is obviously a coverup in her withholding of many of the Epstein files.

DOJ VISITS AND REDDIT

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to chat about what I have been doing at the Department of Justice. Many Members have been going to the Department of Justice to view the Epstein files unredacted. Many of the files I have looked at were still redacted, even ones without victims' names in it. Some of the files I went to look for are no longer accessible and actually have been removed from the website. We know these files existed, but they have been scrubbed by the DOJ.

Americans are tired of the corruption. They are tired of a tiered justice system where depending on how big your bank account is and how connected you are will directly impact the outcome of your case. They want transparency.

I went online to Reddit and different websites to ask folks what I should look at and what they wanted transparency on as far as the Epstein files were concerned. Here today, I wanted to come to the floor to share some of the files that people online have asked me to look into.

The first one was this file that talked about a torture video. This right here is an email. The email belongs to Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, and that is who this was sent to.

The next one has to do with an email that says: "Did you know somewhere