

have skyrocketed the cost of home heating oil and gas at the pumps since the start of the war in Iran 16 days ago.

Today, home heating oil in Connecticut is \$5.10 per gallon, up from \$4.28 per gallon just last week and \$3.74 per gallon a year ago. Gas at the pump is going for \$3.65 per gallon. It was \$2.90 per gallon 1 month ago.

Mr. Speaker, the men and women who have been hard at work at the State pier in New London, Connecticut, for the last 6 years, transforming a decrepit, underutilized dock into a state-of-the-art port that can handle massive cargo carriers, delivering enormous towers, blades, and the nacelles that connect the towers and the blades. Sensors are mounted on the nacelles to detect wind speed, which then moves blades into the wind to maximize output. It is ingenious.

Union operating engineers, electricians, and laborers kept this project moving forward, despite the persistent, hostile obstruction of the Trump administration's Department of the Interior, which issued two illegal halt work orders in 2025. The Department's orders were soundly rejected by Federal district courts in Washington, D.C., and Virginia.

The Department's unfounded claims that Revolution Wind posed a national security threat were decisively and swiftly dismissed given the fact that the Department of Defense, in consultation with the Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard, thoroughly examined this project and issued a permit in December 2024.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD a letter dated December 13, 2024, from the Assistant Secretary of Defense, who found that this project "would not have adverse impacts to DOD missions in the area."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
Washington, DC, December 13, 2024.

Reference Federal Aviation Administration
Aeronautical Study Number: 2021-WTE-
2881-OE and 23 associated structures.

Ms. WHITNEY MARSH,
Ørsted, Providence, RI.

DEAR Ms. MARSH: Thank you for your participation in the Mitigation Response Team to assess and overcome military impacts from your proposed Revolution Wind project off the coast of Squibnocket Beach in Chilmark, Massachusetts. In a letter dated October 27, 2021, the Department of Defense (DoD) described the potential impacts to military operations for the project.

As a result of discussions between Ørsted and the U.S. Air Force and a resulting mitigation agreement signed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment on November 4, 2024, the Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) has found that construction of the Revolution Wind project, with no more than 65 wind turbines up to 873 feet above sea level and no more than two offshore sub-

stations up to 228 feet above sea level, would not have adverse impacts to DoD missions in the area. The Clearinghouse has entered a determination of "No Objection with Provision" for this project via the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis system.

Our response to the FAA included a notification that additional structure proposals or an increase to the current maximum structure height may present an adverse impact. We encourage you to engage DoD prior to any proposed expansion or height increase.

Sincerely,

STEVEN J. SAMPLE,
Executive Director, Military Aviation and
Installation,
Assurance Siting Clearinghouse.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I think all of New England and the mid-Atlantic States owe a huge thanks to Judge Royce Lambeth, the Reagan appointee who lived up to his oath and twice asserted the power of the judiciary, a coequal branch of government, to rein in the administration's ludicrous, harmful abuse of executive power.

As our economy is reeling today from the oil and gas aftershock of the war in Iran, the news this weekend that offshore wind can provide a reliable, affordable source of energy that is produced in America and for American energy consumers is hopefully going to force a reconsideration of the attack on renewable energy by this administration and, unfortunately, my colleagues in the House who have legislatively crushed this industry, depriving American consumers of an affordable source of home-grown energy.

Wind power alone will not solve our energy demands, but 700 new megawatts surging into New England is undeniable proof that our Nation's innovators, our building trades union, and the merchant mariners are up to the job to power our country in the 21st century.

REAL RELIEF FOR WORKERS RELYING ON TIPPED WAGES

(Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS of Iowa was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, hardworking Americans deserve to keep more of what they earn. For millions of workers across our country, especially in restaurants and the service industry, tips are not extra income. They are a critical part of the paycheck.

That is why I was proud to support the Working Families Tax Cut Act, which reduces Federal taxes on tips and delivers real relief to workers who rely on them to support their families. Nearly 6 million Americans report tipped wages. Under this reform, workers can now deduct up to \$25,000 in qualified tips each year.

The impact will be especially meaningful in States like Iowa. In the first year alone, tipped workers across Iowa are expected to save approximately \$59 million in Federal income taxes.

That is money that will stay in the pockets of hardworking Americans who earned it. That is money for groceries, rent, childcare, prescription drugs, and everyday expenses. It is real relief for workers who put in long hours serving in our communities. Reducing taxes on tips rewards hard work, strengthens families, and supports the local businesses that power our economy.

I was proud to help pass the Working Families Tax Cut Act, and I will continue fighting to ensure that hardworking Americans can keep more of what they earn.

CONGRATULATING KEVIN MCKEE

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Davenport native Kevin McKee, who represented Team USA at the 2026 Milano-Cortina Paralympic Winter Games in Italy and has now earned his fourth Paralympic Gold Medal. Kevin competed in his fourth Paralympic Games as a member of the United States sled hockey team, continuing a remarkable career of representing our Nation on the world stage.

A proud Davenport native, a player at the Quad City Veterans Outreach adaptive sports center, and member of the Chicago Blackhawks sled hockey team, Kevin has worn the Team USA jersey since 2012.

Born with a rare spinal disorder, Kevin has turned determination into excellence, helping to lead Team USA to a Paralympic Gold Medal in 2014, 2018, 2022, and now again in 2026.

With a 6-2 victory over Canada, Team USA once again captured the gold medal, demonstrating the strength, teamwork, and resilience that define American athletes.

Kevin McKee's perseverance and leadership make Davenport, the Quad City Veterans Outreach Center, the State of Iowa, and our entire Nation proud. I congratulate Kevin and the entire Team USA sled hockey team on this incredible achievement, and I thank them for representing our country with such pride and excellence.

CONGRATULATING JEFF BLADEL

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Chief Jeff Bladel on his retirement after 31 years of dedicated service with the Davenport Police Department.

Appointed chief in 2022, Chief Bladel followed in his father's footsteps, who served as Davenport's police chief from 2000 to 2008.

A lifelong Davenport resident, Chief Bladel returned home after serving our Nation as an airborne military officer in the United States Army and committed his career to protecting his community.

Under his leadership, the department strengthened data-driven crime reduction efforts and advanced key public safety initiatives, including the Department of Justice's Public Safety Partnership, the Smart Policing Initiative, the National Network for Safe Communities, the Quad City NIBIN initiative, and a co-responding program

pairing officers with mental health professionals.

Chief Bladel also helped to implement group violence intervention strategies that connected at-risk individuals with community resources to break cycles of violence.

Over the past 3 years, the city has seen a reduced number of crimes. Chief Bladel leaves behind a safer Davenport and a lasting legacy of service, leadership, and community partnership.

Mr. Speaker, I wish a very happy birthday today to Lola VanDeWalle, who happens to be the genesis behind the Quad City Veterans Outreach Center.

Happy birthday, Lola.

Mr. Speaker, I wish my daughter, Taylor, a very happy birthday.

Happy birthday, Taylor.

Mr. Speaker, I extend happy birthday greetings to Davenport's Vince Martinez, a soon-to-be 100-year-old on April 5 and World War II veteran. May he continue to live long and continue to help all of our veterans.

AMERICANS STRANDED IN MIDDLE EAST

(Mr. SUBRAMANYAM of Virginia was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken here about how this administration did not adequately warn U.S. citizens in the Middle East before launching attacks against Iran. They left American citizens in the Middle East stranded and told them that they were on their own.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud them for correcting this mistake and working really hard to try to get people flights out and helping them to evacuate. Unfortunately, it looks like that was only a temporary response because this week, I am having constituents tell me that, once again, they are being told that they are on their own.

One family I am working with is in Kuwait right now and was told to take a commercial flight out and that the State Department couldn't help them. The problem is that Kuwaiti airspace is actually closed right now. The family was told that they would have to take a bus to Saudi Arabia and that the State Department wouldn't really help them with that. Even if they did get there, there are frequent restrictions on flights in Saudi Arabia due to continued missile and drone threats.

Again, I am left wondering why we are telling Americans that we have billions of dollars to spend on bombs, missiles, and warships, but we don't have the money to get American citizens who want to get out, out of the Middle East, particularly ones who are in dangerous areas where there are no commercial flights.

It is insulting to tell the American people to foot the bill to get out of the Middle East in a dangerous position when we didn't warn them in the first place.

Once again, I am calling on the administration to help Americans who need to get out, get out. The safety of the American people should come first.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS AI STARTUPS

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, AI is massively reshaping our economy and our small businesses. When most people think of companies leading on AI, they think of the Big Tech companies, but there is more to this AI economy than those big companies. They are AI small businesses and startups that play a key role in innovation. They are the drivers of innovation, economic growth, and American technological supremacy.

They can often be more agile than bigger tech companies and create fantastic solutions and products, but they aren't always working on an even playing field.

That is why I am introducing this week the small AI innovators empowerment act. This bill would look at challenges that small AI businesses and startups face, including areas like access to funding, hiring and retention of talented employees, and the impact of regulatory uncertainty.

Supporting small-tech businesses helps us to stay ahead of international competition as our world becomes increasingly reliant on AI. I thank Congressman OBERNOLTE for sponsoring this bill with me.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting AI small businesses by supporting this small AI innovators empowerment act.

CONGRATULATING THE FLOWER GALLERY

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate The Flower Gallery of Virginia on its 50th anniversary. The Flower Gallery has contributed to the joy of residents in our community, including Manassas and Northern Virginia, since 1976, when Doug Burroughs first bought the shop from his employer.

Over that time, The Flower Gallery has helped our community celebrate life's milestones, including many birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries. It also provides local youth and civic organizations with flowers for fundraisers and community events.

I congratulate Doug for creating such a beloved institution and for 50 years of success. I am wishing Doug and The Flower Gallery many more years of prosperity.

OPPOSING ATTACK ON FEDERAL WORKERS

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, we know that this administration has been constantly attacking our Nation's Federal workers and contractors. They have chased out people with specialized skills and decades of experience, making our country less safe and less healthy, while also making our agencies either understaffed, or led by unqualified loyalists.

The latest attack might actually be one of the worst, and that is the creation of the Schedule P/C positions. We knew that there would be an attack on

Schedule F. This basically would make it easier for career civil servants to be fired and to be replaced with loyalists who are not qualified.

Federal workers would lose job protections, and it would make it incredibly difficult to attract people, retain them, and get the best talent in the country to come work in the Federal Government. We have been working on this across many administrations, and this is undoing a lot of that work.

The reality is that Federal workers and contractors pledge allegiance to our country and not to a President or an ideology. This rule would hurt our country for many years to come, and it would do irreparable damage to our institutions and to the people who rely on them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this rule. It is not well thought out, and it is going to hurt us in the long run.

WELCOMING AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION TO NATION'S CAPITAL

(Ms. FOXX of North Carolina was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise to welcome the American Optometric Association to our Nation's Capital for the 2026 Federal Keyperson Summit.

Since 1898, the AOA has distinguished itself among medical specialists and policymakers for its outstanding leadership, reliability, and advocacy for optometric professionals and students.

From years of standing at the forefront of innovation and high quality in healthcare, we understand that steadfast leadership is essential for positive outcomes in public health policy and a patient's health.

The advocates of the AOA are a model of just that, providing insight on pertinent issues so that optometric doctors, professionals, and students are primed to deliver the critical, high-quality care that patients deserve.

□ 1230

I am confident that this year's summit will prove to be a valuable experience, and I commend the advocates and members of the AOA for their dedication to their profession and patients.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX) at 2 p.m.