

This is not just about economics. It is about accountability. As a lawyer, I understand all too well that every President, including Donald Trump, takes an oath to defend the Constitution. That Constitution gives Congress, not the President, the power to declare war. Yet, Congress was sidelined. The American people were given no clear cause, no clear strategy, and no clear endgame.

We cannot afford this—not economically and not morally. America's conscience cannot afford it.

When leaders promise peace but deliver war, that is not just a policy failure. It is a betrayal of trust.

#### HONORING SERGEANT CODY SIEBERT

(Mr. STAUBER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of Sergeant Cody Siebert, a beloved member of the East Range Police Department, who tragically passed away at the young age of 33.

Cody spent most of his career serving communities on the Iron Range, including his hometown of Babbitt. While serving there, he pioneered the department's K9 program, which he later carried over to the East Range Police Department with his trusted partner, K9 Taconite.

Cody served as the resident K9 officer in the Mesabi East School District. In reading the many tributes shared in Cody's memory, one sentiment stood out. He had a remarkable gift for connecting with people, especially with students.

Beyond the badge, Cody's most important role was that of a father to his two young sons, Reese and Bayne. Cody also leaves behind the love of his life, Karen.

Cody's sudden and unfortunate passing has left a void that could never be filled in his department, in the schools and community he served, and, most of all, in the lives of his family.

Mr. Speaker, the impact he made through his service and kindness will endure forever in the hearts of those who knew and loved him. May he rest in peace, and may his K9 partner, Taconite, be allowed to stay with his loving family.

#### RECOGNIZING KIRK FERNITZ

(Ms. HOULAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary service of Kirk Fernetz, a dedicated public servant who is retiring after decades of service to our Nation, to our veterans, and to our community at the Coatesville VA Medical Center in Pennsylvania's Sixth Congressional District.

Born and raised in Germany, Kirk came to the United States as a student and earned his degree from Edinboro University in Pennsylvania before becoming an American citizen and commissioned as an Army officer.

Over the course of 30 years in uniform, he served in the Active and Reserve Components of the U.S. Army, deploying to Iraq twice and supporting peacekeeping missions in Africa under Joint Special Operations Command.

Following his military service, Kirk devoted more than three decades to the Coatesville VA, culminating in his role as the director of community and congressional affairs, where he worked tirelessly to strengthen the connection between veterans, the VA, and our community.

Kirk's career reflects a lifetime of commitment to service, to our veterans, and to our community, and they are better for it.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's Sixth Congressional District, I thank him for his dedication and wish him and his wife, Kristin, and their sons, Erik and Haydn, all of the very best in retirement.

#### HONORING EARNEST WESLEY DEMPSEY, SR.

(Mr. ONDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ONDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Earnest Wesley Dempsey, Sr. He was a restaurateur, veteran, and a pillar of the St. Charles County community.

Ernie spent years of his life serving in the Navy before becoming an active member of the VFW post 2866, where he advocated for his fellow veterans.

In St. Charles, Ernie was locally famous for running Pio's Restaurant. He started there as a manager, and his hard work ethic paid off when he took over the business.

Ernie was a dedicated leader in his community, serving as the charter member of the Optimist Club and as a board member of the Boys & Girls Club of St. Charles County.

In 2019, he was honored with the Key to the City of St. Charles and was named Restaurateur of the Year.

Ernie contributed to everything that makes Missouri great, and he will be dearly missed.

#### DUAL COSTS OF WAR IN IRAN

(Mr. MRVAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MRVAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart to express my profound upset at the loss of American service-members who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our Nation for a cause in Iran that the administration has yet to adequately justify.

There was no imminent threat. There is no strategy for success. There is no

end in sight, and the American service-members remain in harm's way.

To add insult to injury, the administration's unilateral decision has made rising price concerns only worse for working families, who are already struggling with the costs when going to gas stations or to the grocery store.

Just yesterday, I met with the members of the Indiana Farm Bureau, who also were already struggling due to the increased costs of tariffs. Now, the war has further skyrocketed their input costs and, in particular, fertilizers.

We must be strategic in our approach to protecting our warfighters and end the cost increase this conflict is causing to everyday Americans.

As we move forward with the appropriations process, I will work with all of my colleagues to conduct rigorous oversight and hold the administration accountable for their actions.

#### RECOGNIZING ANTHONY WAYNE HIGH SCHOOL CHEERLEADING TEAM

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary young women of the Anthony Wayne High School cheer team.

Just weeks after capturing the National Cheer Championship title in Orlando, Florida, these remarkable athletes brought home the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators State Championship title.

Led by Erica Black and Robin Buffy, the Generals had the highest score across all teams in all divisions.

Championships are not handed out. They are earned with early mornings, late nights, and countless unseen hours of practice. They are built by coaches who mentor, parents who sacrifice, teachers who encourage, and neighbors who show up again and again.

This victory belongs to the entire Anthony Wayne community. It reflects the strength of our schools, the spirit of our families, and the promise of our young people. Our champions have inspired us and reminded us what teamwork, perseverance, and hometown pride can achieve.

I congratulate them, and Go Generals.

□ 1800

#### REINING IN OUT-OF-CONTROL PREDICTION MARKETS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. MOORE of Utah was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RULLI). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be joined by my colleague this evening. Before I provide my remarks, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HARIDOPOLOS).

HONORING CAPTAIN TED KIMMEY, VETERAN OF THE MONTH

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Captain Ted Kimmey, who served in the United States Army and has been selected as Brevard County's Veteran of the Month.

Captain Kimmey served our Nation honorably, rising to the rank of captain before his honorable discharge from the Army.

Like so many veterans, Captain Kimmey answered the call to serve during a critical time in our country and handled himself with professionalism and integrity.

After his military service, Captain Kimmey continued to exemplify the values of service and civic responsibilities at our home in Brevard County.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of veterans like Ted Kimmey that our Nation remains strong and free. I am honored to recognize his service and thank him on behalf of a grateful nation.

HONORING VETERAN DR. JASON COMERFORD

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. James Comerford, a servant leader whose life reflects a deep commitment to our country, community, and public service.

Dr. Comerford retired as a captain in the United States Army after serving 25 years. During his career, he served as company commander, brigade medical officer, and U.S. Army combatives instructor, earning numerous commendations along the way.

Following his service, Dr. Comerford continued to serve as a college professor, collegiate chiropractor, and mentor to young students across our community, especially at-risk students.

Today, he serves as the associate coach and team doctor for Palm Bay athletics and operates a chiropractic practice that provides care to veterans throughout the VA Community Care Network.

Now, in his third year as chairman of the Florida Board of Chiropractic Medicine, Dr. Comerford continues to lead with integrity. He embodies the Army's core values every single day.

I thank Dr. Comerford and his family for their sacrifice and service to our community.

PROTECTING INDIAN RIVER LAGOON

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share important news for the families of Florida's Space Coast.

Through the recent appropriations package, I was proud to help secure nearly \$14 million to improve water

quality projects and protect the long-term health of the Indian River Lagoon.

The lagoon is one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in North America. It supports wildlife, sustains local fisheries, drives tourism, and anchors the quality of life for all of us in Brevard County.

In recent years, harmful algal blooms and water quality challenges have threatened this vital ecosystem.

This funding will support restoration efforts, strengthen habitat protection, and advance projects that reduce nutrient pollution that has entered the lagoon.

The Indian River Lagoon is more than just a waterway. It is essential to our life on the Space Coast.

I will continue working on this project and many more to make sure that our quality of life stays high. Thanks to the work of the Congress, we are able to give the funding necessary to keep this national treasure in place.

RECOGNIZING HOLY TRINITY'S CLASS 2A SOCCER STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Holy Trinity Episcopal Academy boys' soccer team on winning the Class 2A State soccer championship.

With discipline, resilience, and relentless effort, these student athletes earned the State championship as a testament to their commitment on and off the field.

This victory belongs not just to the players, but also to the coaches, the families, and the community who supported them every step of the way.

Championships are built through long practices, strong leadership, and a belief in one another. This is one great example of just that.

The Space Coast takes pride in its student athletes, and this team has given our community a moment to celebrate. Their success represents the strength of high school athletics and the character it builds in young leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Holy Trinity on an outstanding season and a well-earned State soccer title.

SUPPORTING AMERICA'S COMMITMENT TO SPACE

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026, bipartisan legislation that affirms America's commitment to exploration, innovation, and leadership in space.

The bill reauthorizes NASA's priorities for lunar and Mars missions, strengthens our presence in low Earth orbit, and encourages scientific and commercial partnerships that expand our capabilities and grow our economy.

Working through the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, led by Dr. Babin, we have emphasized continuity, strategic investments, and maintaining the U.S. competitiveness in space, making sure we stay number one in space. As the President said: "You can't be number one on Earth if you are number two in space."

This legislation supports exploration and innovation, uplifts STEM education, and solidifies America's role at the forefront of discovery for generations to come.

As an original cosponsor of this bill, I am proud to stand with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance these goals and defend our Nation's legacy of space leadership.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida. He has a clear passion for his State and the ways that he is going to support it.

I have taken my young son to Cape Canaveral before, and after going on a cruise, which we were fortunate to go on, we literally went to the cape. I think, even after the cruise, Cape Canaveral that afternoon was one of the most fascinating experiences for him, a unique place.

Utah's First District is actually a leader in space as well, with Thiokol of olden days, now Northrop Grumman. We do a lot of amazing work with—I think it is Houston, areas in Florida, Utah, and Huntsville, Alabama, that are big on this.

Mr. Speaker, again, I thank him for his support and great work.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you today for this time to be able to talk a little bit about a really important piece of legislation that I have put forward. It is a proposal for a solution to what I think many have considered out-of-control prediction markets.

Just hours before the United States military strikes in Iran, more than 150 accounts made investments of over \$1,000 in event contracts based on the timing of the strikes, with six traders together making over \$1.2 million.

In traditional betting, an individual places a wager on an outcome with odds set by a bookmaker that determines the winnings. In a prediction market, a trader buys shares in an outcome of an event. There are no odds, and share prices fluctuate based on market responses, allowing investors to turn a profit if they sell high or if their chosen outcome proves correct.

Our classified military strikes should not provide an opportunity for bettors to play or profit. Underregulated prediction markets have exposed America to needless public safety and national security risks by allowing traders to invest in outcomes related to sensitive matters like terrorism, assassination, war, or elections.

This nonpartisan issue has spiraled out of control, and Congress needs to pass legislation to require enforcement.

Congress previously included a subtle provision in the Commodity Exchange Act that preempts State regulation on betting when it is offered through event contracts. This loophole has opened a door to gambling on anything from Taylor Swift's appearance at a Kansas City Chiefs game to when the United States might launch a strike on Cuba.

Sports betting is illegal in 19 States, but prediction markets, like Kalshi or

Polymarket, avoid State regulation through this loophole. Rather than offering betting services, they sell event contracts, a legacy financial instrument with payouts based on the outcomes of real-world events.

Again, this is a loophole for a legitimate financial tool that has existed for decades, maybe even centuries, but they are using this as a loophole to allow for betting in all States.

In January, one investor netted over \$400,000 on Nicolas Maduro's fall from power, making the timely purchase just before President Trump announced the deposed leader's capture. Prediction market Kalshi claims that, legally, this is investing, not gambling.

I introduced H.R. 7840, the bipartisan Event Contract Enforcement Act, to address these concerns and put an end to reckless event-based gambling. This bill strengthens existing law, requiring the CFTC to prohibit event contracts related to terrorism, assassination, war, gaming, or criminal behavior.

The bill also bans trading on election outcomes and government activities to protect our elections from manipulation and insulate the government from insider trading opportunities.

This nonpartisan issue ensures event contracts can continue to serve in legitimate business interests while also protecting Americans from risk. I am looking forward to moving it through the legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1810

#### MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Ms. RIVAS of California was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.)

##### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. RIVAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the RECORD on the subject of my Special Order hour.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. RIVAS. Mr. Speaker, I am here today because we have yet to see a bill offered on the floor during my time in Congress that would make life more affordable for working families.

In fact, since the last time my freshmen colleagues and I were on this floor talking about the Republicans' affordability crisis, Donald Trump unconstitutionally started a war with Iran. So far there has been no meaningful plan or strategy to ensure that America's national security interests or our servicemembers are protected.

We mourn for the families and loved ones of the 13 servicemembers who have already lost their lives in this war, and we hope that another life is not lost.

After just over 2 weeks, Donald Trump's war in Iran has cost the American people \$11 billion. Donald Trump would rather pour billions of dollars to start a war with another country than address the affordability crisis that he and Republicans have created.

I recently conducted a survey of nearly 70,000 constituents in my district and asked them a simple yes-or-no question: Instead of the war in Iran, should Trump focus on making the cost of living more affordable? Over 90 percent of those who responded said "yes." This sentiment is reflected across the Nation.

Donald Trump's war in Iran has the worst-ever support for a war at its start. Trump's reckless and illegal war with Iran is yet another example of how this administration has been out of touch with the priorities of American families since he has been back in office.

The American people do not want our country to get sucked into another forever war. The American people want the Epstein files released. The American people want ICE to be reined in. The American people want to pay less at the grocery store, at the gas station, and at the doctor's office.

Since the war in Iran started, prices for gas, food, and other essentials have spiked. Gas prices shot up 50 cents in just one week, and oil prices hit \$100 a barrel.

Experts believe that Trump's war in Iran could push the average cost of gas to above \$4 a gallon within weeks. Gas stations in Los Angeles have hit over \$8 per gallon.

But Trump says he doesn't have any concern about skyrocketing gas prices. He even called anyone who is worried about the rising cost of gas a fool.

When asked whether Americans should feel scared about retaliatory attacks on U.S. soil, Trump replied: "When you go to war, some people will die."

It is not enough to say that Donald Trump is completely out of touch with the needs of the American people. He does not care about everyday Americans. He is more concerned about lining the pockets of his billionaire donors and starting wars to deflect from the issues people actually care about.

My House Democratic Caucus freshmen colleagues and I refuse to let Trump's distractions deter us from fighting for our constituents. We remain focused on lowering costs for our constituents and holding Trump accountable.

We all voted against Trump's war in Iran, to stop him from abusing his power. It is clear that the American public and Congress do not influence Trump's decisions, and he would rather be influenced by his impulses and emotion.

Our constituents sent us to Washington to make life more affordable for them, not to rubberstamp Trump and Republicans' agenda that actively makes their lives worse for them.

Tonight, we will hear from some of the freshmen Democratic Caucus members and the work that they are doing to make life more affordable for their constituents.

I will start with the Congresswoman from Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JOHNSON), my colleague and friend.

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend Congresswoman RIVAS for hosting this Special Order hour.

Mr. Speaker, millions of American families are struggling with the skyrocketing cost of living. They can't afford gas, groceries, or their bills.

Republicans in the White House week after week are gaslighting the American people. Now, we are seeing Donald Trump make reckless foreign policy decisions which are increasing the costs for American families as we speak.

Over the past few weeks, the news out of the Middle East has been alarming. Trump has significantly escalated military involvement in Iran, a war that puts American lives at risk.

Now, let's talk about what this means for working families. Wars aren't just fought overseas, but they are paid for right here in the United States. Every increase in military spending and every escalation of conflict has a ripple effect that touches grocery bills, utility costs, and most immediately the price at the pump.

Gas prices are rising with an average gallon in Texas now between \$3.26 and almost \$3.50, while diesel approaches \$5 a gallon, a jump of 25 cents just this past week.

It is families who are paying the price: parents who are driving their kids to school, commuters trying to get to work, and seniors who are trying to make their Social Security stretch just a bit further.

All of this is happening while Trump and Republicans continue to ignore the affordability crisis facing everyday Americans every day of every week and every hour.

We are talking about real families deciding whether to fill their car with gas or put food on the table. We are talking about the anxiety that comes from not knowing how to cover the next bill when our leaders gamble with the lives and the money of American taxpayers abroad.

The billion dollars that we are spending each day on this war could be spent on supporting families, tax relief, the child tax credit, healthcare, the Affordable Care Act—everything.

How many times have we heard from Republicans coming to this floor clutching their pearls saying: Oh, we don't have the money to spend to make healthcare accessible for so many people.

There are so many things that Republicans come down here to say that we don't have the funding for, yet they are willing to let this President spend