

Well, Madam Speaker, justice, freedom, and opportunity are not cake. It does not run out if someone else gets a slice.

REMEMBERING TIME IN CONGRESS

Mr. HERN of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker and my dear friend, I rise today for what will likely be my last speech as a Member of this Chamber.

Nine years ago, I was having coffee with my wife, Tammy, when she encouraged me to run for Congress. While I am sure there were times when she regretted that encouragement, she has remained the rock of our family and the reason I have been able to serve in the people's House.

A lot has changed in my life outside these walls. I have watched my sons get married and build families of their own, and bless us with the incredible gift of five grandchildren. I also experienced the loss of both my parents, two people who helped shape who I am today.

These years have brought great joys and difficult moments, reminding me of what matters most. In Congress, we spend a lot of time talking about titles: chairman, ranking member, leader, and so on. Husband, Dad, and Papi are the titles I am proud to hold most.

I was sworn into Congress in November of 2018. While most freshmen Members have a few months to prepare for this job, I had less than 7 days. I learned early in my business career to surround yourself with people you admire and respect. Little did I know then that STEVE WOMACK, who chaired the House that day, would be one of those people. He and I grew up in the small town of Russellville, Arkansas, and we both graduated from Arkansas Tech University. Steve's wisdom and advice guided me early on, and I thank him for his friendship and support.

I often say there is no book written on how Congress works, but there is one man who knows how all of it works: my good friend and mentor, TOM COLE.

TOM is our historian and who we go to when we need advice, a kick in the right direction, or just a moment to take a break with a cigar, or maybe two, or maybe three.

I knew I wanted to serve on the Ways and Means Committee. I got advice from other Members, but Tom took me under his wing and showed me the full picture. I would not have been on Ways and Means today without his mentorship and support.

Ways and Means is where I found my home in Congress, where I could use my business background to offer policy solutions and push back on the ideas that I believe would hurt the economy.

I am honored to have served under the two great chairmen: Kevin Brady and JASON SMITH, both who led the committee through major legislative victories and created tax policies that will allow our country to flourish for years to come.

Ways and Means was also a place where I saw that bipartisan work can also get done. In 2021, after months of trying to meet with Biden's Treasury Department, I shared my frustration with my fellow Ways and Means colleague, BRAD SCHNEIDER. Brad offered to help set up a meeting, which was something I thought was an empty gesture.

□ 1030

Madam Speaker, I was wrong. A week later, I was on the call with those who I had been trying to meet with for months. It was a reminder that even when we disagree, we can still find ways to work together.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank my friend, RICHIE NEAL, who chaired Ways and Means during my first 2 years on the committee and now serves as the ranking member. RICHIE is a true professional, something that sometimes we are lacking in this place. He is willing to work with you where common ground can be found, while respecting differences when it cannot.

One of my favorite jobs in Congress was chairing the Republican Study Committee. I worked with some of the best and the brightest staff in the world and brought together Republican Members to tackle critical issues, like government funding and debt ceilings. Those discussions helped to create policy proposals, many of which became law in Congress. I have no doubt that the RSC will continue to be a leading force in shaping conservative policy in Congress.

I also recognize Speaker JOHNSON and our leadership team, which is navigating one of the slimmest margins in history. It is no easy task, and MIKE and his team have worked tirelessly to keep the House moving forward and delivering for the American people. I am grateful for their leadership and everything they have done for our Conference.

Lastly, I thank my staff who have worked alongside me for the past 8 years. I am proud to have one of the lowest turnovers on Capitol Hill. My chief of staff and district director have been with me from the very beginning, and the majority of my staff have stayed with me for multiple Congresses.

I am equally proud to have watched others grow into new opportunities, including four who have become chiefs of staff for other Members and others who have taken on leadership roles in the Republican policy areas.

My D.C. staff have worked countless hours to advance policy proposals, many of which have been signed into law. Back home, my district staff has achieved great successes in delivering for Oklahomans.

Almost 8 years ago, I ended my first speech by saying: "Let's get to work." While I am proud of the work that we have achieved during my time here, the American people rightly expect a lot from those who are elected to office,

and our job is to deliver for them. My hope is that I will have the opportunity to continue that work on the other end of the Capitol.

As I leave this great Chamber, I only have to say the same as when I started: Let's get to work.

RETURNING JAPANESE CITIZENS ABDUCTED BY NORTH KOREA

(Ms. TOKUDA of Hawaii was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. TOKUDA. Madam Speaker, imagine sending your 13-year-old daughter to school and waiting nearly 50 years for her to come home.

That is what Sakie Yokota has endured since North Korean agents abducted her daughter, Megumi, in 1977. As a parent, that thought is absolutely heartbreaking.

I think about my own sons. I imagine them growing up without me at an age so young that, after all those years, they might not even recognize my face.

Koichiro Iizuka knows what that is like. His mother was abducted when he was just 1 year old.

There are 17 Japanese citizens officially recognized as having been abducted by North Korea. While 5 returned home, 12 remain unaccounted for.

Their families have grown old waiting. Many passed away. Sakie is now 90 years old. Every year without answers is another year stolen from them.

This is not only Japan's tragedy. David Sneddon, an American college student who disappeared while hiking in China in 2004, is also believed by his family and many others to have been abducted by North Korea. His fate remains unknown.

These cases are a warning. When governments are allowed to make people disappear, no family and no country are beyond their reach.

Japan is one of America's closest friends and allies. If President Trump has an opportunity to speak to Kim Jong-un, he must raise these abductions directly. He must press for the return of every abductee and a full, credible accounting for those who remain missing, including David Sneddon.

Diplomacy cannot be limited to weapons, sanctions, and security agreements. It must also be about human beings. Democracies must stand together in defense of our people and their most basic human rights. Time has already taken far too much from these families. We cannot allow silence to take away their last hope for answers.

RESTORING FUNDING FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Ms. TOKUDA. Madam Speaker, this is not the first time I have taken to the floor to talk about Kauai Community Radio, KKCR.

When Congress defunded the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, KKCR lost \$83,000. I warned then that this wasn't simply about radio programming. It was about whether communities would have a trusted lifeline when disaster strikes.

Last week, Hurricane Lowell proved the point. When the storm hit Kauai, power went out across the island. Cell service and internet became unreliable. Roads were blocked. Trees came down. Communities were cut off.

KKCR stayed on the air. When the power failed, they switched to a generator. When the internet went down, they used a donated Starlink connection. When trees went down around their North Shore station, they kept broadcasting.

For a time, KKCR was the only station that Kauai could hear. They carried updates from the mayor and emergency management officials. They relayed calls from listeners who were reporting weather, road conditions, and power outages in their neighborhoods. They told people where they could find food, ice, water, and help. They played music to keep people calm. In the digital age, when clocks and phones had gone dark, they even reminded people what time it was.

KKCR was founded after Hurricane Iniki to provide emergency communication. More than three decades later, Hurricane Lowell shows us why that mission still matters.

This is what Congress put at risk when it cut public broadcasting—not entertainment but a lifeline. We must restore this funding because when the next disaster comes, the question is not whether people will need KKCR. It is whether KKCR will still be on the air to answer the call.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

(Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. Speaker, a leader's strength is never his own. It is borrowed from the courage, the talent, and the integrity of those who walk with him. The last 8 years have proven that to me time and time again. I have had many blessings in life, but none quite like the people who I have worked with.

I will start with our brilliant case-work team: Andrea Rose-Prehn, Reid Rasmussen, Danica Allmer, and Aimee Hoyle. They have each helped hundreds of South Dakotans get the treatment they deserve from our Federal Government. The work is complex. It is frustrating, and nobody does it better than they do. In 2023, they won the top award for outstanding constituent service in Congress.

Aimee, Danica, Reid, and Andrea have improved countless lives, and I cannot thank them enough.

Our D.C. team is extraordinary, too. In each of the last three Congresses, they were named the number one most effective office in one policy area or another. With 435 offices, being number one isn't that easy. Some offices specialize in social media hot takes or partisan attacks, but Sydney Powers, Mason Ohnstad, Kristen Blakely, Andrew Rasmussen, and Jon Sundet spe-

cialized in getting things done. They are brilliant, funny, and driven. They have helped govern in an era where governing is not easy.

It is not just our current team who has been excellent. We have remarkably little turnover in our office, but we have some great alums.

When I think back to those who gave more than 2 years to us—Jazmine Kemp, Alana Lomis, Hannah Hulehan, John Weber, Nathanael Monroe, and Chance Hunley—I am proud. They did incredible things with our team, and they have done incredible things since. Our experiences will always bind us together, and I am happy for that and how many experiences there have been. I look at our team today, and I am touched. Most of us have been here since day one, 8 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, 8 years is an eternity in this crazy time and in this crazy place. We have fought, worked, and laughed together. We have celebrated 8 weddings, 12 births, and 6 high school graduations. What a joy it has been to live life alongside these great people.

I will close by talking about our senior team: Andrew Christianson, Elizabeth Walters, Courtney Heitkamp, Chelsea Schull, and Katie Neff.

I cannot believe that leaders of their caliber have dedicated 8 years of their lives to our office and to working with me. I am so odd, so particular, and so demanding. How have they done it?

I have leaned on these leaders every single day, and they have never let me down—never. I have never had cause to question their heart, work ethic, loyalty, integrity, or patriotism. Andrew, Elizabeth, Courtney, Chelsea, and Katie are the finest humans who I have ever met.

Mr. Speaker, there is still much to be done in the 119th Congress, and I promise I will keep working hard for South Dakota until the very end, but when this chapter of my life closes in January, I will not miss the shutdowns, the political posturing, or the TV cameras. I will miss the people, the very best people.

RESTORING GLOBAL CLIMATE ACCORDS

(Ms. STANSBURY of New Mexico was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, it rained yesterday in New Mexico—a real rain, a monsoon rain, a rain that we have been waiting for, for months in our communities.

My social media was flooded with images of people celebrating, recording out of their windows and doors, dancing, and rejoicing. That is because in New Mexico, in our desert, water is life, water is culture, and water is what sustains us.

As New Mexicans, we have been in the grips of a historic drought. The mighty Rio Grande has been dry for a record of over 90 days through our communities this summer. We have had

record-low snowpack and the highest number of high-heat days over 90 degrees. In our communities, climate change is not a hypothetical. It is here.

Our communities are on the front lines and bearing the brunt. Our farmers have been forced to drill wells and fallow their fields. Our acequias, which are hundreds of years old, have gone dry. Ancient orchards that have sustained our communities have been lost, and a bosque and wildlife have suffered through the consequences.

This is not just New Mexico. It is happening all across the planet. Extreme weather is pounding the shores of California and Hawaii right now. Wildfires have left the West Coast and the East Coast covered in smoke for months. In August, globally, it was the hottest year in recorded modern history.

The planet is raising the alarm, and our communities are on the front lines. For years, the United States has been a global leader. We helped to lead negotiations that led to global climate accords. We invested in new technologies and clean energy. We aggressively committed to stopping and transitioning pollution to save our economy and our planet.

Yet, since the current President took office last January, not only have we seen one of the largest increases in pollution from the United States in modern history, but we have seen our standing as a nation fall in the eyes of the world.

He rescinded climate policies on day one and removed us from international agreements, just this week announcing the removal of clean air protections and divestment from technologies that our Nation was at the forefront of, as our adversaries are stepping in to take over global economic dominance. He even invaded a foreign country to steal their oil, even when U.S. oil companies did not have a development plan for it.

This has not only led to the highest prices at the pump that we have seen over a Labor Day weekend in the history of the United States, but it has set our country back decades. Why? To give kickbacks to his donors, oil and gas companies that he asked to donate \$1 billion to his campaign; corrupt side deals with foreign actors and foreign leaders; his own insider trading, which he posted an AI image of in the Oval Office just this last weekend; and his own efforts to increase prices in order to line the pockets of his own investments and those of his family and friends.

We are paying the price in drought, in heat, at the pump, in our food, in our housing, and in air that is too smoky to breathe for our children.

□ 1045

Well, we have had enough, Mr. Speaker. That is why myself and a delegation of congressional leaders are headed to Climate Week in New York, to recommit to the United States climate leadership, to recommit to a climate-resilient future, to lay out a plan