

Doug LaMalfa. He was not just a Member of Congress, but, more importantly, he was a farmer, a husband, a father, and my friend. He was a man whose character was shaped long before he ever set foot in Washington.

Doug LaMalfa was about as salt of the earth as you can get. For him, farming was not just something he talked about in speeches. It wasn't a paycheck. It was something that he lived. For the last few days, I have been looking back on our text exchanges and have watched and rewatched the videos that he sent me from the tractor while he was harvesting rice and being a bit of a goofball.

That was what was unique about Doug. He understood the dignity of hard work because he did it himself. Long days, unpredictable seasons, and quiet responsibility of caring for land and providing for others formed the foundation of who he was. That background grounded him. It gave him patience, perspective, and a deep respect for the people who keep this country fed and moving forward.

The same principles he embodied as a farmer and steward of the land were in the same sense of stewardship that guided him here in public service. He approached leadership the way a farmer approaches the land: thoughtfully, practically, and with an eye toward the future. He believed that you leave things better than you found them, Mr. Speaker, not just for today, but for the next generation.

I truly believe that what set Doug apart was his kindness. Every time I saw him, I was greeted with a loud and booming—if you knew Doug, Mr. Speaker, then you know it was going to be a booming voice: “Hey, KAT CAMMACK.” He also made a point to say my name right, and he put an emphasis on the “mack” because he was always flustered and frustrated when he would hear other people say it and couldn't say my name right.

When he wasn't doing that, he was asking me about how Big Daddy Garlits was doing, the drag racing titan who calls my district home, or how sweet baby Auggie, my newborn daughter, was doing. He was always teeing up some goofy story or taking a funny selfie, and it was those same goofy and wholesome selfies that have dotted the photo album on my phone for the last 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, those who knew him best will tell you that his compassion was quiet but genuine. He listened more than he spoke, and he treated people with respect, regardless of who they were or where they came from. Whether he was meeting with a constituent, helping a neighbor, or working alongside our colleagues, Doug never forgot that public service was about people, not politics.

When the news broke about his passing, a constituent of his wrote a note to me, sharing a story of how she had just lost her husband and was in shock.

She had ordered a flag to be flown over the Capitol in honor of the birthday of a friend who had been with her through the loss of her husband, but due to a mixup, her flag had never arrived. She said she had “given up on it.”

Fast forward to a Sunday morning. She answered a knock at her door. She was in her PJs and a hoodie, and she found Doug LaMalfa standing there, flag in hand. He explained it had been returned to his office due to a mixup in the mail, but he knew that she would want it. She was so impressed that not only did he get her the flag, but that he delivered it personally and on a weekend.

What Congressman does that?

While it seems like the exception today, things like that were more of a rule for Doug. His kindness wasn't performative. It showed up in small moments like taking the time to return a phone call or show up on a Sunday to deliver a flag, checking in on families during hard times and seasons, or just standing up for communities that often feel unseen or unheard.

Doug LaMalfa carried the values of rural America into the Halls of Congress: faith, hard work, generosity, and resilience. He never lost sight of who he was or where he came from, and because of that, he never lost sight of whom he served.

Today, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully every day, we remember a farmer who answered the call to serve his country, a public servant who led with integrity, and a man whose legacy will live on in the lives he touched. May we honor him by carrying forward those same values of caring deeply, working hard, and treating one another with the kindness that he so naturally gave, because Doug would want it that way.

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

EXAMINING FRAUD IN CALIFORNIA

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. KILEY of California was recognized for 30 minutes.)

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment this morning to examine the biggest fraud scandal in the history of California and probably in the history of the United States, and that was the fraud in unemployment benefits that occurred in California during the COVID years, amounting to a minimum of \$32 billion—\$32 billion.

It is easy to kind of throw these numbers around and lose sight of what they really mean, so just to put that in perspective, that was one-half of the education budget in California at the time, and it is more than the entire State budget of the vast majority of States in the country.

□ 1210

Now, the reason that this scandal bears scrutiny right now is threefold.

First, a State audit just found 2 weeks ago that this unemployment fraud in California is ongoing to this day continuing to cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

Second, the Senate still has not passed a bill that we passed in the House to hold some of these fraudsters accountable by extending the statute of limitations.

Third, the Newsom administration, perhaps sensing the political peril following the events in Minnesota, has come out and absurdly tried to deny responsibility for this scheme, for this scandal, and even more absurdly tried to blame the Federal Government for it.

I want to go through exactly what happened because I believe it is important to show why taxpayers were so thoroughly defrauded and to assure that this does not continue to happen going forward.

The reality is that the fraud that occurred in California took place despite the repeated warnings of the Federal Government, and it was uncovered not by State officials but, rather, by local prosecutors.

On November 23, 2020, a group of nine county prosecutors disclosed what they called the most serious significant fraud of taxpayer funds in California history. Now, at the time, they said they could only prove \$1 billion. So \$1 billion was already the biggest fraud of taxpayer dollars in California history. Now we know that it was at the very least \$32 billion.

Contrary to what the Newsom administration is trying to say now, at the time, the district attorney of Sacramento County, Anne Marie Schubert, said: “We have asked and implored the Governor to turn the spigot off.” She said the Governor's Employment Development Department was not doing commonsense things, like cross-checking claims with prison rolls, something that the vast majority of other States were doing and that the Federal Government had advised.

She said this made the scheme “relatively easy.” She called the Governor's response slow and nonexistent. She advised Governor Newsom to “look to other States for solutions.”

The district attorney of Fresno County, Lisa Smittcamp, said: “(Newsom) did nothing until the elected district attorneys brought it to the media.” She added that she did not think the State has a handle on it. Those were comments made back in November of 2020.

The following January, the State auditor came out with a report that laid forward in very precise detail exactly how significant the failures of the Newsom administration were, specifically with their unemployment office, known as the EDD.

A heading in that audit said: “Significant Weaknesses in EDD's Approach to Fraud Prevention Have Led

to Billions of Dollars in Improper Benefit Payments.” Among the key findings: Despite repeated warnings, despite repeated warnings, EDD did not bolster its fraud detection efforts until months into the pandemic, and it suspended a critical safeguard.

The audit goes on to list examples of where suspicious addresses were simply ignored in the claims process. In one case, more than 1,700 claims came from a single address. From one address 1,700 claims, and yet the checks were issued.

One of the problems, as mentioned, is there was no crossmatch system to crossmatch the claims against the prison rolls, so you actually had checks that were being sent to State penitentiaries, the State prisons.

Here is a timeline of the aforementioned warnings that actually came from the Federal Government. Now, this is significant, again, because the Newsom administration is now claiming somehow that it was California that warned the Federal Government when, in fact, it was exactly the opposite. Other States followed these warnings, but California didn't.

In April of 2020, the United States Department of Labor sent instructions for implementing the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program and told States to take reasonable steps to deter and detect fraud, including audits.

The following month, in May of 2020, there was a second notice from the U.S. Department of Labor, warning the States to maintain the integrity of the unemployment program.

Later that month, in May, the U.S. Department of Labor requested data from California, and the Office of the Inspector General warned California that the State was likely to see at least a billion dollars in fraud based on new claims for March and April.

During this time, the Newsom administration's EDD office had exactly two staff members who were responsible for reviewing suspicious claims.

Newsom's EDD also allowed the backdating of claims until September of that year, so if you were a fraudster, you could simply claim that you had worked a certain number of weeks, previous weeks that had already passed, and there was no verification needed at all.

The problem of suspicious addresses got even worse. The audit reports there were 26,000 addresses listed as suspicious, with more than 500,000 associated claims.

The audit concludes: Our review illustrates that EDD continues to pay claims despite having evidence that they are very likely fraudulent. Again, this is a finding. This is a talking point. This is not from the Governor's political adversaries or from people on social media, this is a report from the nonpartisan California State auditor in January of 2021 saying: “Our review illustrates that EDD continues to pay claims despite having evidence that they are very likely fraudulent.”

The audit continues: Between March of 2020 and early January of 2021, more than 2.2 million claimants did not satisfactorily answer requests that they provide identity verification. In fact, there was another problem that then emerged from this that people became victims of identity theft, and then they ran into issues like they had to pay taxes on wages they hadn't actually received.

As mentioned, the audit also notes that “EDD was unprepared to detect and handle the hundreds of millions of dollars in fraudulent claims associated with incarcerated individuals.” I mean, how crazy is that? That you had claims coming in from State prisons, and those claims let out hundreds of millions of dollars.

As the auditor says: “As we describe throughout this report, EDD's approach to fraud prevention and detection demonstrates the weaknesses caused by its poor planning and program management.”

Local media reports at the time substantiated all of these claims, including in publications like The Sacramento Bee and the Los Angeles Times.

What is even worse is that the criminals who are purloining our State Treasury of these taxpayer funds in many cases were using those dollars—I mean, what do you think they are using them for? We talk about waste, as in this money is just squandered, but it is actually much worse than that because the criminals who get these funds, they are not then giving them to charity. They are using them for further criminal activities.

One example from The Sacramento Bee is about how these funds were used to buy guns illegally. For example, a report from The Bee reported that multiple fraudulent EDD cards were discovered along with firearms in the hands of convicted felons, results that law enforcement officials say leads them to one conclusion: Criminals are using funds from the growing EDD fraud scandal to buy weapons. Mind you, this was at a time when violent crime rates were soaring in California and far outpaced the rest of the country.

Just to give you a couple examples, the Torrance police found that more than two dozen people had been arrested in the fall of 2020 for alleged unemployment benefits fraud and identity theft. The 27 suspects used stolen identities to obtain over 130 EDD cards. When they recovered these, the authorities also found \$150,000 and four handguns, including two without serial numbers.

The Glendale police, in early 2021, arrested a man who was in possession of a so-called ghost gun, along with ammunition, drugs, several fraudulent EDD cards, and other illicit items.

To summarize, you had the largest fraud of taxpayer dollars, likely in the history of the United States. The nonpartisan State auditor in California,

along with nonpartisan prosecutors from throughout California, clearly identified the negligence of the Newsom administration as enabling this fraud to occur which far outpaced anything that occurred anywhere else in the country.

□ 1220

You then had the criminal syndicates and other criminals, more run-of-the-mill criminals, who obtained these funds and used them to spawn further criminal activity that victimized even more Californians.

Now, 5 years later, the fraud continues. The administration still hasn't learned its lesson. The same State auditor just found that EDD remains one of eight high-risk agencies in California, a number that has doubled during the Newsom administration, finding that the EDD continues to allow millions in fraud, alongside millions that are being lost in fraud in connection with SNAP benefits, with improper Medi-Cal determinations, not to mention community college fraud and fraud basically everywhere you look throughout the California government.

Now you have the Governor insisting that no, none of this was his fault. California did nothing wrong. He has even made up bogus numbers like he somehow prevented \$125 million in fraud.

The concern is this: If the Governor and his administration are unwilling to admit any responsibility whatsoever despite the clearly established evidence of their responsibility, how can we expect this problem to ever be fixed?

I will tell you. I am working in a bipartisan way here in Congress to bring accountability for the vast fraud that continues to take place in California so that our taxpayers do not have to see their hard-earned money going to criminals and can finally start getting a reasonable return on their investment in our State government.

CALIFORNIA LEADS NATION IN OUTBOUND U-HAUL RENTALS

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, U-Haul has just released its annual growth index for all 50 States, which is a measure of U-Hauls coming in versus going out. In other words, which States are people moving out of and which States are people moving into.

For the sixth straight year, 6 years running, California is ranked 50th. In other words, we rank first when it comes to people leaving the State. This is truly an astonishing fact. The greatest State in the country, the most beautiful State in the country, has become the most popular State to leave.

This is reflected in the fact that California lost a Member of Congress in the 2020 reapportionment and we are projected to lose four or five in the 2030 reapportionment.

Indeed, for 170 years of California history, our State's population grew each and every year. It was only during the administration of the current Governor that that trend reversed itself and the State continues to lose people.

It is a very sad thing when you look at the boundless potential of our State, the unmatched beauty, the incredible people and companies and culture. We have everything. Yet for too many Californians, it has become too difficult to get by in California or it is the crime or it is the homelessness. It is the inability to buy a house. It is the price of gas or electricity or water. It is the fact that our State leads the Nation in unemployment, in homelessness, in poverty, in illiteracy. These are all politically created problems.

The good news is there is a coalition for common sense emerging in California, and we have started to see progress in circumventing our State's political class and bringing real change. For example, we passed a measure in 2024, the voters did, to restore some consequences for criminal activity. It passed with almost 70 percent of the vote, despite the Governor and the State legislature's leaders opposing the measure every step of the way.

We won a decision at the Supreme Court that has restored the ability of our communities to clear homeless encampments and ensure people get into shelters and don't wither on our streets. As a result, we are starting to see some modest improvements in crime and homelessness in California, but unfortunately, we still have a long way to go in order to make sure that next year California does not, once again, for a seventh straight year lead the Nation in outbound U-Haul rentals.

WEALTH TAX IN CALIFORNIA

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, there is currently a proposed ballot measure in my State of California to impose the Nation's first-ever wealth tax. In response to this proposal, you are already seeing an exodus from California because, while the measure won't be presented until November and won't take effect until next year, the language of it ensnares anyone who was a resident of California until January 1 of this year. It would actually try to apply itself to former residents.

Now, California already has the highest income tax of any State in the country, the highest gas tax, the highest overall tax burden. However, a wealth tax is something unique because a wealth tax is not merely the taxation of earned income, it is the confiscation of assets.

They are saying it is just for billionaires. Of course, it starts with billionaires and then they continue to lower the threshold, ensnaring more and more people. Even for billionaires, presenting a 5 percent tax on all of your assets is problematic because, number one, it requires actually having liquid assets amounting to 5 percent of one's net worth, but number two, what you are already seeing happen is entrepreneurs and job creators are simply leaving the State to avoid this unique penalty.

Now, we already have the highest unemployment rate of any State in the

country in California, so it really doesn't help that now the State is causing even more job creators to leave the State. But what is especially threatening about this is that our State's tax structure is essentially a house of cards. Even the Governor acknowledged in his state of the State yesterday that we have a system that is incredibly volatile, where the top 1 percent of earners account for 50 percent of the tax revenue.

If you have this wealth tax that is suddenly going to cause the highest earners not to want to have anything to do with California, the State's finances will collapse. The entire house of cards will come tumbling down.

This is not to mention the myriad constitutional problems with this proposal, not the least of which is the idea that they are going to try to apply it to former residents.

It also isn't to mention the problems of administrability, which is why if you look to other countries that have tried to impose some form of a wealth tax, they have quickly rescinded the policy because it turned out to be a disaster.

I will be fighting against this latest, misguided, insane proposal in every way that I can and that includes using the legislative authority that we have here in Congress under clauses such as the Commerce Clause to prevent a renegade proposal like this from, at the very least, ensnaring taxpayers who have already gone to other States.

□ 1230

Mr. Speaker, California has for too long gone down the road of overtaxing its citizens, overregulating its businesses, and overburdening its citizens. This would simply be a bridge too far.

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

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Kevin F. McCumber, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 224. An act to amend section 102(a)(20) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to require the exclusion of service-connected disability compensation when determining whether a person is a person of low and moderate income, a person of low income, or a person of moderate income, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, January 12, 2026, at noon for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

EC-2618. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; Fireworks Display, Lower Mississippi River, Natchez, MS [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1062] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2619. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; Sandusky Bay, Sandusky, OH [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1039] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2620. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; La Quinta Channel, Ingleside, TX [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1123] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2621. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; Fireworks Display, Ohio River Mile Marker 73 to 74, Wellsburg, WV [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1099] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2622. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; West of Cyril E. King Airport, St. Thomas, VI [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1110] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2623. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zone; Coast Guard Base San Juan, San Juan Harbor, Puerto Rico [Docket Number: USCG-2025-0366] (RIN: 1625-AA87) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2624. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; Port of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1066] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

EC-2625. A letter from the Administrative Assistant, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's temporary final rule — Safety Zone; Patapsco River, Baltimore, MD [Docket Number: USCG-2025-1045] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received January 7, 2026, pursuant to 5 U.S.C.