

out of the way and allows hardworking people to succeed.

Republicans put America first when we passed the largest tax cut in American history. We delivered no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, and tax relief for seniors by lowering taxes on Social Security benefits, because the key to affordability is bigger paychecks, not bigger government.

People are going to be feeling the effects of these tax savings in their pocketbooks this tax season, where Georgia families can expect up to \$5,000 in savings. By unleashing American energy, we are bringing relief to families right now.

The national average of gasoline is now under \$3 a gallon. That matters to everyone, from the large-scale shipping to the blue-collar worker driving their daily commute.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done in 2025 is just the beginning. As we move to 2026, Republicans are focused on expanding opportunity even further, bringing jobs back home, growing domestic manufacturing, and ensuring the American Dream is within reach for every person willing to work hard, especially our young people.

The key to Republicans' success is that we govern by a simple concept, common sense. It is common sense to use our vast natural resources and unleash American energy dominance because affordable energy means affordable living, just like it is common sense that trillions spent on so-called Green New Deal projects caused runaway inflation at over 9 percent.

President Trump and Republicans are reviving the American Dream by advancing progrowth, proworker, America First policies that help young people build a future, provide relief for our elderly, and strengthen the middle class and everyone in between.

I thank the President for his work on our economy.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his comments. I appreciate his thoughts and for articulating much of that.

Mr. Speaker, last year House Republicans passed the working families tax cuts. This was a reconciliation bill that included monumental progrowth and profamily legislation that lowers costs for American families.

A lot has been said about this. I want to share just a few aspects of this as we are within 6 months in the rear view of when we accomplished this. Again, the largest tax increases on American history would have happened on January 1 of this year had we not completed that, and we got it done 6 months prior to that crisis. I don't know the last time I looked at Congress and found something done that far ahead of schedule. It is usually the last minute.

That matters because that was a reality. That is what we knew was coming, and we worked hard to accomplish a lot of really key important progrowth elements: no tax on tips or

overtime, an increased child tax credit, tax relief for seniors, an increased standard deduction targeted entirely at the middle- and lower-income Americans, investment in rural America. These are just a few of the reasons Americans will see significant increases in their upcoming tax returns.

Mr. Speaker, that doesn't even include the provisions that strengthen small business and encourage investment in American industry.

□ 1800

This year, House Republicans are keeping more hard-earned dollars in working families' pockets, not with the Washington bureaucracy. The tax filing season begins next week, and Americans can expect to see some of the biggest tax refunds in history.

After 4 years of painful inflation, we are cleaning up the economic mess. Real wages and benefits fell 3.9 percent during the Biden-Harris administration, and through the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, real wages are growing faster than prices.

We saw 4.3 percent real GDP growth in the third quarter of 2025. That is substantial. The average since World War II is 3.1 percent. After 3.8 percent in Q2, we continued to exceed expectations there. Economic growth is an important economic indicator with a substantial impact on our annual deficits, and I am confident it will only continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, 2026 will be about bigger paychecks and lower costs on everything from healthcare to housing to household goods. We are moving forward with housing affordability legislation to lower costs and update financing options. We are streamlining and simplifying permitting processes to create more jobs, reduce costs, and increase wages. We are also lowering healthcare costs. In December, the House passed legislation to cut premiums, expand Choice accounts, provide more affordable rates to small businesses, and expand PBM transparency to lower costs of prescription drugs.

Mr. Speaker, 2025 was a big year for my team and for House Republicans. We passed landmark legislation, and people are going to see the difference because of it.

I am looking forward to 2026 and continuing to work hard for Utah's First District.

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

#### EXPIRATION OF NEW START

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

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and submit extraneous material to the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to open the Special Order hour to discuss the expiration of the New START treaty, the importance of arms control, and the urgent need to strengthen global nuclear security.

I thank the Members who will be joining me this evening for their leadership and their willingness to engage on issues that carry existential consequences for our country and for the world.

As many of my colleagues know, I am the only Ph.D. physicist currently serving in the United States Congress. Before coming to Congress, I spent more than two decades as a high-energy particle physicist and particle accelerator designer at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, where we were smashing together protons and antiprotons to make particles that have not been around since the big bang, designing and building the big particle accelerators and detectors, and analyzing the data. I was on the team that discovered the top quark, the heaviest known form of matter.

Because of that background, I feel a special responsibility to engage deeply on issues of nuclear weapons, arms control, and strategic stability, not as abstract policy debates but as matters grounded in technical reality.

Arms control is not about unilateral disarmament, wishful thinking, fantasies of dominance, or trusting adversaries. Arms control is about verifiable limits, predictability, and reducing the risk of miscalculation between nuclear-armed states.

For decades, arms control agreements have helped prevent a catastrophic nuclear exchange, not by eliminating deterrence but by stabilizing it.

The New START treaty, which stands for Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, was signed in 2010 and extended in 2021. It is the last remaining bilateral nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation.

New START places verifiable limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons and delivery systems and provides for data exchanges, notifications, and on-site inspections that give us direct insight into Russia's nuclear forces.

New START followed a long line of arms control agreements, from SALT to START I to SORT, that helped reduce the global nuclear arsenal from the Cold War highs of more than 70,000 weapons to fewer than 13,000 today. These agreements were supported by Democratic and Republican administrations alike because they made the United States safer.

Under New START, the United States does not rely on guesswork, on satellite imagery alone, or on worst-case assumptions. We rely on legally binding limits and on verification

measures backed by some of the most sophisticated scientific and intelligence capabilities of the world.

Today, that system is fraying. Russia has suspended its participation in New START. Onsite inspections remain paused. The treaty itself is set to expire in less than 1 month.

Anyone who remembers past arms control negotiations understands the gravity of this moment. Negotiating a successor agreement will take years, not months, and we are already past the danger zone.

If New START expires without a replacement, there will be no legally binding limits on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals for the first time in more than half a century. The consequences of that outcome would be serious and immediate.

The United States would lose treaty-mandated insight into Russia's deployed nuclear forces. Both countries would be free to increase the number of deployed warheads on existing missiles. Strategic planning would increasingly be driven by worst-case assumptions rather than verified facts. At the same time, we would face a far more complex nuclear environment than during the Cold War.

China is rapidly expanding its nuclear forces. Russia continues to engage in irresponsible nuclear saber-rattling during its illegal war in Ukraine, and Iran and North Korea continue to change the global nonproliferation regime.

In this environment, allowing arms control to collapse is not a show of strength. It is an abdication of leadership that increases the risk of miscalculation of arms races and, ultimately, nuclear use by design or by accident.

Verification will be at the heart of any future arms control effort, and this is where America's scientific enterprise plays a critical role. Our national laboratories provide the technical backbone for verification, monitoring, and treaty compliance, and they are essential to maintaining U.S. leadership in this area.

As co-chair of the Bipartisan National Labs Caucus, I have seen firsthand how investments in science and scientific talent directly translate into national security.

If you are a Member of Congress, you have the opportunity, if you ask, to go into the room where you see our nuclear weapons taken apart. You talk to the experts about why the design choices were made, what the design margins are, and why they have to be built the way they are. If you walk into that room and see those weapons and think about what they are capable of, if that doesn't make you take your job seriously, you are not thinking clearly.

Verification is not a diplomatic afterthought. It is a scientific challenge that demands sustained investment and expertise.

The choice before us is not between arms control and national security be-

cause arms control is national security. It remains one of the most effective tools we have to reduce nuclear risk while maintaining a credible deterrent.

The expiration of New START without a successor would mark a dangerous turning point, signaling that restraint and verification no longer matter.

This Special Order hour is about sounding the alarm, but it is also about reaffirming that Congress has a responsibility to engage. Congress has a role in oversight, a role in funding verification and nonproliferation, and a role in insisting that arms control remains a core pillar of the U.S. national security policy.

The next few years will be decisive, and decisions that we make or fail to make will shape whether the world moves toward stability or toward, once again, unconstrained nuclear arms races.

I look forward to the discussion this evening.

I am now proud to introduce my colleague, JOHN GARAMENDI of California, a longtime advocate for arms control, with whom I have had the honor of spending a weekend underneath the north polar ice cap in a nuclear submarine.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI).

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. FOSTER for bringing us together to talk about this profoundly important situation.

We stand here today on a precipice. In less than a month, the New START treaty, the last remaining major arms control agreement between the Soviet Union, or Russia, and the United States, is set to expire.

□ 1810

If we allow this treaty to lapse without a replacement, then we will be entering a world we haven't seen in decades, a world without limits on the nuclear arsenals of the two largest nuclear powers: Russia and the United States. We will be stripping away the last guardrail preventing a catastrophic return to the unchecked nuclear buildup of the Cold War.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declared a profound truth: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. That principle has been the bedrock of global security for nearly 40 years. It led us and Russia to eliminate nuclear testing, to shrink bloated stockpiles, and to prioritize communication over conflict.

Yet today we are close to forgetting that profound blessing. Instead of prioritizing deescalation, we see a resurgence of the same Cold War mindset that once pushed us to the brink of annihilation. We see hawkish perspectives pushing the U.S., Russia, and now China to a new, three-way nuclear arms race.

Proponents tell us that this buildup will make us more safe and that more

is better. They tell us that pouring trillions of dollars into a nuclear modernization is the only way to be safe, but nothing—nothing—could be further from the truth.

Without nuclear arms control agreements like the New START, every new weapon we build only fuels an unwinnable arms race as our adversaries respond in kind. We build. They build. We build. They build. And the cost of this race is staggering.

Let me give you one example, Mr. Speaker: The Sentinel program aims to replace the Minuteman III ICBMs. This single program has already ballooned to cost over \$200 billion, an 81 percent cost overrun. We are spending blindly. We are on remote control: more bombs, more, more, and we will be safe.

That is nonsense, just nonsense. We will not be safer.

Instead of doing the hard work of diplomacy, we are being asked to plow billions of taxpayer dollars into a dangerous fantasy: the so-called Golden Dome, a missile defense system. We will be safe. We will build more bombs, and we will stop their bombs.

We are told the system would cost only \$175 billion and it will provide the perfect shield. However, a recent working paper showed that this system that actually attempts to defend against the full range of Russia and China will cost as much as \$3.6 trillion, a multi-trillion-dollar gap between rhetoric and reality.

So what do we get for that price?

The same report concludes that with this unlimited spending, such a system will still fail to be 100 percent effective.

Are we prepared to spend trillions of dollars on a shield that cannot be 100 percent effective?

Oh, well, only if one or two bombs get through, forget about New York and forget about Washington, D.C. After all, who needs Washington, D.C.?

We have to be prepared to think differently. We cannot spend trillions of dollars on a shield that cannot protect us all the while that we are building more and more bombs so that our adversary will build more and more bombs and find a way to evade the shield.

They will. We cannot engineer a technological fix for a political problem. Decades ago we realized the only true shield against nuclear annihilation is not a Golden Dome. It is the hard, unglamorous work of a verifiable arms control treaty.

When we forget the lessons of the past, then we are doomed to make the same mistakes. Luckily, we still have time, a very short time, to do the hard work of diplomacy instead of resting the fate of our Nation, in fact, humanity, on the fantasies of fool's gold.

We still have a choice. We can choose to continue down the path of unconstrained spending and escalation and drift toward a future where security is based upon a perpetual threat of annihilation, or we can choose to modernize our thinking rather than just our

weapons. We can prioritize diplomacy over escalation and arms control over an arms race. In short, we can learn from history.

That is why I am a proud cosponsor of H. Res. 100, authored by our leader today and support arms control agreements and negotiated constraints.

This resolution is not just about a treaty. It is about sanity. It is about reaffirming our commitment to arms control, to oversight, and to policy based on reason and restraint, not on fear and reflex.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois for organizing this evening. We have 1 month in which to extend the New START treaty or we can fall into an arms race. We have choices. We have time, and we have the power to change.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say the gentleman is absolutely right about the messaging that is surrounding the Golden Dome effort. This is a system that has never been tested against countermeasures that we know our adversaries have. For 40 years physicists have been patiently explaining to Members of Congress and members of the administrations that systems like this will never work at the reliability level that they need. For 40 years we have been howling at the wind, I guess, because we don't have hundreds of billions of dollars to waste on a system that you can calculate from elementary principles that doesn't have a chance of working and has failed the majority of times it has been tried.

For those who have not, please take the time to see a recently produced movie called "A House of Dynamite." It is a recent one that actually talks about what a modern nuclear war would look like from the point of view of the participants who have to make those decisions and the equipment and provisions they have to aid those decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER).

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Dr. FOSTER for gathering us here to help shine a light on what remains the most serious existential threat facing our country and our planet. It is too easy to forget in these days of polycrisis that we are on the brink of a new nuclear arms race.

Very soon, one of the last remaining pillars of the nuclear arms control regime, the New START treaty, is due to expire. This treaty restricted the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals and provide some measure of stability in our bilateral relationship.

Sadly, the Trump administration has failed to do anything to get ahead of the expiration of New START and has done a lot to raise nuclear tensions. The President has made threats, endorsed insanely expensive plans to expand our arsenal, pushed for the resumption of explosive testing, and advocated for an impractical missile de-

fense system that will only encourage our adversaries to accelerate their own weapons program.

I am particularly horrified that the President may choose to ignore the comprehensive test ban treaty which has given comfort and safety to the world for two generations.

Meanwhile, Russia has expressed an interest in maintaining New START restrictions on its stockpile for another year while the terms of a new treaty can be hashed out, but, unfortunately, the White House has not responded to their offer, and it has shown no interest in engaging with China either on nuclear arms reduction, this despite the danger China is dramatically trying to build up its nuclear arsenal. If ever there were a time to talk to China, it would be right now.

It is not hard to guess what happens next if nothing changes. Each side will be adding now weapons to their arsenal for the first time in decades. We would come back to 10,000 nuclear weapons aimed at the Soviet Union, 10,000 aimed at us, to 1,500 to 1,800 each.

Now we are going back to that feedback loop that was reminiscent of the first days of the Cold War. Not only will this cost a tremendous amount of money and put us on an even more dire fiscal trajectory, it will ratchet up the very real danger of a nuclear exchange.

□ 1820

Mr. Speaker, we can already destroy the planet many, many times over with our own existing nuclear stockpiles. Why on Earth do we need to spend more of our scarce resources on these incredibly expensive weapons? We have gone through this cycle before. We were very lucky, but I am terrified we will not make it through again.

This shouldn't be a partisan issue. It has never been partisan. Republican Presidents from Dwight Eisenhower to Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush have all led on arms control agreements.

I have been critical of my own party's approach to nuclear weapons. The Biden administration, despite campaign promises, refused to adopt a first-use or no-sole-use nuclear policy.

Currently, the U.S. President can order the launch of hundreds of nuclear warheads within 15 minutes, with no oversight or even conversations with the Speaker of the House, the Secretary of Defense, the chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and including Congress. Vesting this much power in one person, particularly this President, is irresponsible, dangerous, and unnecessary.

Given our massive conventional military advantages over our adversaries—think of Venezuela—there is no plausible circumstance that could justify the use of nuclear weapons to deal with a nonnuclear threat.

Removing the specter of the U.S. using nuclear weapons first in a conflict would go a long way toward slowing down this renewed global arms race. I am so glad to see my colleagues here share my concerns. I hope we can

make a dent in the common sense here in this Congress.

While I have you here, today I voted against a funding measure that would enshrine the Trump administration's illegal destruction of the United States Agency for International Development, USAID.

Among the litany of illegal, immoral, and illegitimate acts committed by this administration, what President Trump and Elon Musk did to USAID will echo in our history as one of the most evil and pointless decisions made by this country.

Hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable people in the world have died already because of this decision so far. Their premature and tragic deaths are the direct moral responsibility of Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Marco Rubio. They remind me of the comments of an unnamed French diplomat speaking of the horrors of World War I: The war I cannot find it to be so bad. The death of one man, that is a catastrophe; 100,000 deaths, that is a statistic.

Our global reputation and soft power around the world have suffered permanent damage. Our ability to fight future global pandemics and diseases has been crippled, and U.S. farmers have suffered needlessly on top of the hundreds of public servants who were harassed and thrown out of their jobs. Beyond the human cost, far from saving the taxpayer any money, the State Department's own assessments show that shutting down the agency will cost more than \$6 billion.

The whole point of this misguided crusade against starving and sick children overseas was to find waste, fraud, and abuse that simply did not exist. This was a case of the very worst of us attacking the very best of us.

I have heard from hundreds of my constituents, former USAID public servants, who dedicated their lives to making the world a better place. Their overwhelming regret is not that they lost their jobs but that the critical work they did to help the poor, the sick, and the starving has stopped.

I am sickened by what this administration has done to USAID and to the world. I will do everything I can to reverse this awful decision.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Dr. FOSTER for convening us together and for his leadership.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the many excellent points he made, one of which was how foolish it would be for the United States to resume testing of nuclear weapons.

The fact is, the United States has the best database of nuclear test results of any country on Earth by far. If we resume nuclear testing, we will, as will all the other nuclear-capable countries on Earth, they will rub their hands with glee, and soon they will have a dataset of performance of their weapons that is as good as ours. We have a tremendous advantage, and this would be a foolish way to give it away.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOYLE).

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, at a time when global tensions are rising, the last thing we need is more weapons. That is why it is so important that the New START treaty, set to expire in 21 days, is renewed by the administration quickly and in good faith.

The New START treaty reduced the number of nuclear warheads in the United States and Russia to the lowest level since 1950. This is not the time to start going in the other direction.

Nuclear risks continue to rise, and when we see countries like Russia testing their nuclear delivery systems, the danger grows for everyone, including many Oregonians.

In southern Oregon, the Federal Government rushed to mine uranium in the 1950s to fuel the Cold War. Two open-pit mines outside Lakeview in the Fremont National Forest supplied the material that went to the Hanford site to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons.

When that rush ended, we were stuck with that contamination. It took decades for the EPA to declare the mines as Superfund sites, leaving the land poisoned.

At the Albany Research Center, construction workers built, maintained, and later tried to clean up the nuclear weapons complex, often without being told what they were exposed to. Decades later, workers are still fighting to get screened for cancers and other life-threatening illnesses caused by their exposure to radiation. Taxpayers are still paying the price from the arms race.

The Federal Government has paid out more than \$27 million to more than 430 Oregonians who were uranium workers exposed to fallout or downwind of testing. This is what happens when we forget what nuclear proliferation cost us.

Yet, the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy plan to spend more than \$900 billion over the next decade to modernize our nuclear arsenal.

The cost of the Sentinel ICBM missile program alone has exploded, pushing the cost per missile to \$161 million, an 81 percent increase from its original projections. The cost of nuclear acquisition programs will be 11.8 percent of the Department of Defense's planned acquisition costs over the next 10 years. Remember, this is an agency that cannot pass an audit. This is out of control.

We will always find the money for war, but not to take care of our workers or Tribal partners or to compensate the communities who paid the price for that last generation of weapons, so we must act in good faith to ensure an open-ended arms race does not happen.

Nuclear nonproliferation has not been and should not be a partisan issue. We don't need more weapons. We need more affordable healthcare, upgrades to our transportation infra-

structure, expansion of U.S. manufacturing capacity, and to focus our taxpayer dollars on things that benefit the American people and that make our communities safer.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with any of my colleagues to develop a commonsense approach to limiting our nuclear stockpiles and to keep this administration from taking us down a costly and destabilizing path, which is why I am proud to have cosponsored H.R. 100, which, again, just reiterates my position on nuclear proliferation. I thank Dr. FOSTER for all his work.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman is absolutely right about the real costs of restarting the arms race.

As a physicist, I have some guilt, frankly, collective guilt for physicists about some of the irresponsible things that were done during the arms race when we said the only thing that was important was to have better weapons and more weapons than our adversaries, and forget about the damage that it can inflict on our American soldiers, our American workers, and the populations downwind.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois, Dr. FOSTER, for yielding me the time and for scheduling this hour on this most important topic.

The threat of nuclear weapons challenges our conscience. It is a threat not just for Americans, but for all humanity and all species of life on our planet.

The idea of nuclear conflict isn't an issue that families normally discuss around the kitchen table, but it is real. It is deadly serious. It demands our urgent attention. We cannot afford to throw our hands up and say there is nothing to be done.

The United States can take concrete action today: Extend the New START treaty. The arc of arms control is one of success led by Presidents of both parties.

□ 1830

Forty years ago, there were 70,000 nuclear warheads in inventories around the world. Today, there are 12,400—far more than we should have, but it is progress.

Arms control is hard work. It involves technical expertise, diplomatic skill, and political will. Today, we need all three. That is because the last control agreement remaining in force between the United States and Russia expires on February 5, in only 22 days.

The New START treaty limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads for each party to 1,550, on no more than 700 deployed long-range missiles and bombers. Extension is common sense for our security.

First, New START promotes stability. With the war in Ukraine, tensions between the U.S. and Russia are high. Negotiating an extension offers space within that relationship to lessen tensions.

Second, if not renewed, we risk the possibility that each side will go beyond the treaty's limit in a misguided pursuit of geopolitical advantage.

Third, there is no nuclear strategic gain from deploying more warheads on more delivery vehicles. Our massive, largely invulnerable nuclear arsenal is more than sufficient for deterrence.

Fourth, increasing our strategic forces might incentivize China to accelerate its nuclear buildup.

Lastly, it would cause us to funnel billions more taxpayer dollars into our nuclear arsenal when we should be restoring funding to healthcare, medical research, and food and nutrition programs here at home.

Why is it that we always have money for bombs, but when it comes to helping improve the quality of life for our people, we are told we can't afford it? It doesn't have to be this way, and both Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump seem to agree. Both Presidents have spoken favorably of extending New START.

In September, Putin said: "Russia is ready to continue to adhere to the central quantitative restrictions under the START treaty for 1 year after February 5, 2026," if the United States reciprocates. In response, Trump said: "Sounds like a good idea to me."

Here we are, 22 days from expiration. The White House has yet to reply to the Kremlin's offer. The clock is ticking.

I ask the administration to respond to the Russians today: announce we will abide by the New START limits, build confidence, and create time and space for negotiation.

President Trump can be a leader for peace. Last year, he said, from the Oval Office: "There is no reason for us to be building brand-new nuclear weapons. We already have so many. You could destroy the world 50 times over, 100 times over, and here we are, building new nuclear weapons, and they are building nuclear weapons."

President Trump, I have to say, you are right. He can join Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan among the Presidents with major arms control wins.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Congress, I have worked to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons. With Representative JILL TOKUDA of Hawaii, I introduced H. Res. 317, a resolution that calls on the U.S. Government to return to the negotiating table on nuclear disarmament and to lead a global effort to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons.

I have also introduced, with Senator Ed Markey from my State of Massachusetts, the Hastening Arms Limitation Talks Act of 2025, or the HALT Act. Our bill outlines a vision for a 21st century freeze on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons.

We never thought there would be a need to revive the nuclear freeze movement, but here we are.

Let me quote from Michael Klare, an arms control expert at Hampshire College and a constituent of mine: "February 6 is likely to bring us into a new era, not unlike the early years of the Cold War, in which the major powers will be poised to ramp up their nuclear warfighting capabilities without any formal restrictions whatsoever. That comfortable feeling we once enjoyed of relative freedom from an imminent nuclear holocaust will also then undoubtedly begin to dissipate. If there is any hope in such a dark prognosis, it might be that such a reality could, in turn, ignite a worldwide anti-nuclear movement like the Ban the Bomb campaigns of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s."

We have a path out of this. Trump can make good on his statement that there is no need for new nuclear weapons. He can extend New START limits on deployed warheads.

For our sanity and for the safety of Americans and all of humanity, let's make the world less dangerous.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank the gentleman from Illinois for leading this effort.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Massachusetts is absolutely right. Diplomacy is not a lost cause. There have been some big wins from diplomacy.

Back when I was younger, the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons was higher and then decreased. We convinced, through diplomacy, South Africa to give up their nuclear weapons. At the time of the end of the Soviet empire, Ukraine possessed the world's third-largest nuclear weapon inventory, which they voluntarily gave up in return for a guarantee of territorial integrity—one, unfortunately, which we are not abiding by.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO).

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague, Dr. FOSTER, for yielding, for organizing and hosting this Special Order hour, and for his leadership on nuclear nonproliferation issues.

In my many years as a Member of Congress, I have watched many a fiery floor speech filled with overstatement and hyperbole, grandiose pronouncements laced with exaggeration and puffery, but it is entirely right and proper to say that the expiration of the New START treaty will make the world and every inhabitant blessed to live on it less safe.

Formally, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, otherwise known as New START, caps U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals and underpins onsite inspections.

It is the latest in a series of treaties that have reduced the global nuclear warhead stockpile from a high of 70,000 in the mid-1980s to roughly 12,000 today.

Now that is meaningful, serious progress, but instead of building on that progress, we are weeks away from reversing those hard-earned gains.

On February 5, New START is slated to expire. That expiration will mean the end to limits or verification of the still-formidable nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia.

New START is by no means perfect, but removing these safeguards will create a vacuum, and we all know nature abhors a vacuum. Without these limitations, there are fewer constraints, fewer eyes, and fewer brakes on how Vladimir Putin expands and modernizes Russia's nuclear forces. In this wilderness, we would see a broader breakdown of norms on nuclear weapons.

Both the United States and Russia have openly mused about potentially restarting nuclear weapons testing. After we have worked so hard to bring some clarity to nuclear weapons regimes, we risk the steady erosion of the few safeguards against these terrible and awesome weapons, but the U.S. is not without options or agency.

If this expiration comes to pass, it is because we have allowed it to happen. Russia has offered to voluntarily maintain the New START limits for 1 year. We should take that deal not because we trust Vladimir Putin but because inspections and limits protect us, not him.

Arms control is neither an act of faith nor of naivety. It is an act of cold logic and discipline, a process that reduces the risk of miscalculation, escalation, and catastrophic error. The year will not only keep America and the world safer, but it will also give time to hammer out a new accord.

As the U.S. sits across the negotiation table, there should be no illusion. We know that Putin and his cronies in the Kremlin are adversaries of the United States. They would like nothing more for our Nation to falter, but they are also self-interested.

Both the United States and Russia benefit from a stable, controlled nuclear regime. That mutual self-interest lies at the heart of why New START was signed in the first place. To throw it all away would be a mistake of immense proportions.

While time is short, we can step away from the edge. I add my voice to a host of others calling on, pleading for, demanding action from the Trump administration.

I know the threat of nuclear weapons can often seem so large and abstract, so unimaginable that it becomes easier just to ignore it all, but to say nothing is not an option, especially for someone like me.

Many of my family, my distant family, were in Hiroshima on the day the atom bomb fell. That memory is not just historical. It is personal for me and my family.

□ 1840

Mr. Speaker, the atomic bombs of 1945 caused unimaginable horror. Some died instantly, many over subsequent days and months. Others suffered for the rest of their lives, afflicted with burns, radiation, and cancer.

The modern nuclear weapons of today are orders of magnitude more horrifying. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that these weapons are never used again.

New START is a concrete step toward ensuring that future. It is one where no person—no man, woman, or child—lives under constant threat from nuclear annihilation.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. TAKANO for reminding us of Hiroshima.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity for the first time in my life to visit, and the things that stick in your mind are hard to describe.

One of them is they have the steps of—I think it was a bank. Someone was sitting on the steps, having a meal, when the nuclear weapon went off overhead. All that remained of that person after his or her entire body was vaporized was a shadow of where they were sitting on those steps.

The power of these weapons is not easy to describe. I can calculate it. The descriptions of the survivors are worth spending a day just listening to and trying to understand what is at risk here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Nevada (Ms. TITUS).

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative FOSTER for having this Special Hour on such an important topic.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen the movie "A House of Dynamite" as well as "Oppenheimer" the previous year, which introduced a lot of people in the moviegoing world to the development of our first atomic bomb at the Manhattan Project.

It is very important that we go from popular culture to real history and talk about this in terms of the destruction that will occur if we do not continue the New START treaty.

I am a former political science professor. I have taught and written about the history of nuclear weaponry. I am now a Member of Congress, representing southern Nevada. A lot of testing is right in our own backyard. Over the years, I have learned quite a bit about our nuclear legacy, both good and bad.

Nevada was the focal point of nuclear development throughout the Cold War. Over four decades, the Nevada test site, which is located about 100 miles north of downtown Las Vegas, hosted over 900 nuclear tests, more than any other place in the country.

Throughout the 1950s, the visible mushroom clouds often loomed in the distance. They could be seen from the strip, and they became part of a tourist attraction there in southern Nevada.

These tests were conducted for a number of reasons. They were to better understand the power and effects of nuclear weapons, what were the consequences, how could we make them bigger, and how could we make them cleaner. All of these things were part of that testing.

The test site became a real player and had a major role in shaping our policies, both nationally and internationally, regarding testing and non-proliferation.

The radiation given off by more than 100 atmospheric tests had devastating impacts, however. It wasn't a tourist attraction to those downwinders who were exposed. That fallout caused cancer and premature deaths for thousands across the West.

That is what prompted me to introduce the PRESUME Act. It would ensure that radiation-exposed veterans, who did war games there at the test site, could receive their rightful benefits from the VA.

Furthermore, there were 800 underground tests that sometimes vented, and radioactive contaminants came out in the air or the water table. That is a problem we are still dealing with today. Some of you may know the story of the Baneberry shot.

Last year, the Nevada Legislature passed a resolution urging the Federal Government to maintain the moratorium on nuclear weapons testing. That has been in effect since 1992. They cited risk of environmental damage and also health hazards from what had been caused by testing before.

My colleagues may remember that in 2020, the first Trump administration called for a resumption of nuclear testing in the breach of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Back then, I led the charge in the FY 2021 NDAA process to ensure that that didn't happen and that we couldn't resume that testing in the United States.

Pardon my bad French, but "the more things change, the more they stay the same"; "plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose."

On October 29, 2025, just last year, Trump announced that he was directing the Department of Defense to again resume nuclear testing in a disastrous policy reversal. It is really not surprising because it is in Project 2025, which is the policy blueprint of this disastrous administration.

Just look on page 399, and you will see that Project 2025 calls for the rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty once again. It would allow testing here at home but would also give a green light to other nuclear powers around the world to start doing the same.

This would put us on a disastrous collision course of catastrophic proportions with Russia and China. It would allow the proliferation of these weapons to nonnuclear States that seek its development. It would also put the health of Nevadans once again in jeopardy.

By foolishly announcing his intention to resume nuclear explosives testing, Trump will trigger a dangerous nuclear arms race that could blow apart our strategy for the last decades and any kind of nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

There is no technical national security or political reason for us to re-

sume nuclear testing. If a power resumes testing because the U.S. is abandoning the moratorium, those countries will develop new types of warheads, close the technical and scientific advantage that we have always had, and be a detriment to our national security.

Furthermore, scientists are already doing groundbreaking experiments and simulations, as our professor knows. They test the existing stockpile to make sure it is safe, secure, and reliable. These subcritical tests are done without an explosion of any kind.

The last time a nuke was tested was 2017 by North Korea. That was a good while ago, the longest period since 1945 that we have gone without a nuclear test. Are we really the ones who want to break that record and start testing again?

For these reasons, I introduced the RESTRAIN Act to prohibit the resumption of explosive nuclear testing and prevent any funds from going toward Trump's misguided policy.

Amidst all this nuclear saber-rattling, the New START treaty that we are here to talk about tonight, which is the last remaining arms control agreement between the U.S. and Russia, expires in just 21 days. That treaty caps deployed strategic nuclear warheads at 1,550 each and limits deployed systems for delivery to 700 per side.

Without this treaty in force, there would be no legally binding limits on the size or composition of the U.S. and Russia strategic nuclear arsenals. This would be the first time in over half a century.

Without limits, both countries could expand their nuclear forces without constraint and potentially trigger a renewed arms race internationally just like we had during the Cold War. Letting that treaty lapse without a successor closes the door on incremental progress toward broader, multilateral nuclear arms control.

If President Trump really wants to be the President of peace and really thinks he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize, he would stop invading and threatening to invade other countries, he would drop the idea of resuming nuclear testing, and he would make tangible, necessary steps to prevent New START from expiring, to make sure the catastrophic consequences of a new nuclear arms race are averted.

Unless there is dramatic action, the world will be a much more dangerous place after February 4. We cannot let that happen.

Again, I thank Mr. FOSTER for his time and for allowing me to join him on this important topic.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I have to say Ms. TITUS is absolutely right about the fact that there is no necessity to resume nuclear testing.

We have a very extensive program. It is called the Stockpile Stewardship Program. Every year or so, the heads of the weapons labs and the head of NSA have to sign a document to the

President that says: If you push the button, these weapons will detonate at their designed yields.

The reason they are confident to do that is we have a lot of test data from the nearly 1,000 tests—many of them took place in Nevada—and the extensive data we have and the fact that we can then put that data back into simulation programs to get the right answer.

Mr. Speaker, that tells us that these will work and they will work with design margin. Even if small things go wrong, the device will work. That is what our opponents have to know. We don't need to test. If we decide to use them, they will work.

□ 1850

It is an important thing to bear in mind, because our adversaries, many of them, have weapons that they have not tested, and they don't really know how well they will work. We do because we have some of the most, I have to say, beautifully designed weapons that I could ever imagine that could have existed.

Mr. Speaker, as we conclude this Special Order hour, it is important to restate a fundamental reality that nuclear weapons remain one of the greatest existential threats facing humanity. For more than a half of a century, the United States has worked across administrations and across party lines to reduce the risk that those weapons will ever be used.

Arms control agreements like New START have been central to that effort, providing real, enforceable, and verifiable limits on the world's most destructive arsenals. The extension of New START is set to expire, and with it goes the last remaining treaty that limits and monitors the world's two largest nuclear arsenals.

As New START expires without a successor, we would lose onsite inspections, data exchanges, and mutual visibility into the Russian nuclear forces. That loss does not make the United States safer or stronger. It increases uncertainty. It fuels worst-case assumptions and raises the risk of a dangerous miscalculation.

That is why I am proud to be leading H. Res. 100, which calls on both Russia and the United States to continue abiding by the numerical limits set under New START, even in the absence of a successor treaty.

I thank the 24 Members of the House, several of whom spoke here tonight, who have cosponsored that resolution. Maintaining those limits are an essential step to preserve strategic stability while we work on future arms control.

I thank the many organizations and nonprofits who helped drive interest in this Special Order hour and who work every day to reduce nuclear risk. Those organizations play a vital role in public education, policy development, and maintaining dialogue during times when official channels are strained or closed.

Finally, I thank all of my colleagues who joined me tonight in this Special Order hour. Preventing nuclear war has never been a partisan goal, and history shows that bipartisan cooperation is not just possible, but it is necessary. The choices that we make in the coming months will shape global security for decades to come, so I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to recommit to arms control, to verification, and to the hard work of reducing nuclear risk.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

### RESHAPING THE AMERICAN FAMILY

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

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this building, we had a panel put together to address the situation of the lack of two-parent homes in America and the degree to which it is caused by huge marriage penalties in our welfare system.

The panel consisted of Matt Dickerson of the Economic Policy Innovation Center, Terry Schilling of the American Principles Project, Jamie Gillespie from the White House, Robert Rector from The Heritage Foundation, together with three Congressmen.

The purpose of the program was to provide a framework to deal with the antimarriage bias in American welfare programs. The panel was put together at the request of 16 organizations and other concerned citizens who work with nonprofits.

In addition to The Heritage Foundation and the American Principles Project, Center for Urban Renewal and Education, Advancing American Freedom, AdvanceUSA, Concerned Women for American Legislative Action Committee, the Coalition for Jewish Values, the Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Eagle Forum, Family Watch International, Faith and Family Foundation, Independent Women's Forum, Students for Life Action, the Family Policy Alliance, and the Faith and Liberty in the Nation's Capital organization all were present.

I, quite frankly, since I have been here, haven't seen such a groundswell of so many conservative nonprofit groups to come together to address such a problem. Yet, this isn't surprising. The number of children born into families without a mother or father at home, missing one, is very high. When I was a child, that number was around 4 percent to 5 percent. It is now around 42 percent.

These groups have gotten together to call on President Trump, Speaker JOHNSON, and Majority Leader THUNE to do something about this. It is not

unusual that a single woman, if she marries the father of her child, would lose over \$25,000 in benefits.

By the way, when I talk about going from 4 percent without a mother and father at home to over 40 percent, at the time it was 4 percent, we didn't even have abortions. Think about that. Then, in the interim, we had abortions, and still the number of children born into homes without a father at home went up by a factor of more than 10.

There are over 70 government programs available to a single parent with low income, but you lose the benefits of these programs if you marry the other parent who has a decent income of, let's say, \$50,000 a year.

I realize that there are great American families of all backgrounds. I, like all of us, know single parents who have done a fantastic job of raising their children. I commend them for that, but I think, also, everyone would agree that it is easier on both the parents and the children if you have two parents there. In essence, bribing a young couple not to get married is not the way to go about doing things.

Programs like food stamps; low-income housing; earned income tax credit; Women, Infants, and Children; Medicaid; Pell grants; and government daycare all are generous programs. You would lose those benefits if you had another parent in the house with an income.

Of course, this changes behavior, as well. I remember talking about this topic about 15 years ago at a Tea Party event in Wisconsin. I talked about Pell grants, which is a program of free college tuition or free scholarships for low-income kids. I was addressing, like I said, a Tea Party group, and like most Tea Party groups, it is usually older men who agreed with me.

Yet, there was a young gal who was tending bar where we had the meeting, and I asked her what she thought about the speech and what she thought about Pell grants, which were, like I said, a grant conditioned upon having low income.

She said that her and her husband got married before they had children, but she told me none of her friends were getting married. They got free college.

I have heard that from other people. That is just one of these programs, Pell grants, which, intentionally or unintentionally, is designed to discourage marriage. Like I said, I rattled off about eight programs. There are about 70 programs that you could lose if you worked your way out of poverty or married somebody who wasn't in poverty.

Usually, what you have to do is you have to keep your income below \$16,000 or \$17,000, and if you talk to employers who hire people who are making in the \$10 to \$15-an-hour range, they will always give you anecdotes of their employees who don't want to work extra hours, or they will lose their benefits.

□ 1900

They don't want a raise because they will lose their benefits. This is because in America right now we discourage work, and we actually discourage savings as well, and we discourage marriage as well.

Just yesterday, I heard of another couple. They just had their second child, but they weren't getting married. I didn't dig into it, but I know what is going on when you have people like that not getting married. They realize they don't want to lose their benefits.

Now, the fact that all of these government programs are set up to discourage marriage, is this an accident? Believe it or not, no, I don't think it is entirely an accident, because there are very powerful intellectuals on the left who wanted to get rid of families.

We know Karl Marx himself felt that in order to have a dream universe, you had to get rid of the family.

A woman by the name of Kate Millett, who was around in the 1960s and I think could be described as the mother of women's studies classes, also was adamant that we should try to get men out of the household. I don't think it is a coincidence that she was at the peak of her power in the 1960s when a lot of these programs went into effect.

Now, this problem should have been addressed years ago. It is kind of a well-worn anecdote, but I will say it again. Patrick Monahan, a Democrat U.S. Senator, in the late 1960s put together a study, and he warned the degree to which we had these programs contributing to the breakdown in marriage, but nobody paid attention Patrick Monahan.

Another man who did a lot of work in this area was George Gilder who wrote a couple of books, "Men in Marriage," "Visible Man," "Wealth in Poverty." He first looked into this problem, as some people do, in a ghetto in Albany, New York. He could remember the time right before that when it was a considered real crisis if a woman got pregnant out of wedlock. However, to his surprise, even in the 1970s, it was a cause for enjoyment or a cause to celebrate for the young couple because when the girlfriend got pregnant, she was able to make the rounds and get a free apartment, get free food, get free medical care and, at the time, get free cash from a program called Aid to Families With Dependent Children. Now we have cash from a program called TANF.

In any event, Gilder was a little bit surprised, but wrote books on the matter saying: Hey, wait a minute here. It shouldn't be a cause for celebration when someone gets pregnant out of wedlock. It should be a cause for a little bit of panic and what are we going to do now; but it wasn't in the late 1970s as George Gilder documented.

Here we are today. We did do a little bit of looking at the welfare programs in the 1990s under Bill Clinton, but we didn't go anywhere near far enough.