

Let's go on to the third. Mark Meritt says:

We want to make sure that wholesalers who sell to the drugstore aren't trying to sell the most expensive thing and pass the cost onto consumers.

All right. Here we go again. This is getting familiar. It has little to do with wholesalers. PBMs design the formularies—yes, we understand this, Mark—that dictate what drugs are covered by insurers. Because there is no transparency, PBMs are able to receive drugs at discounted prices but refuse to tell employers. PBMs are then able to still charge employers the full amount for the drug, even though they are receiving it cheaper. PBMs often receive large rebates to incentivize them to include expensive brand name drugs in their formularies, even though cheaper generics are available.

Mr. Speaker, listen. They receive large rebates to incentivize them to include the expensive brand name drugs on their formularies. I had an issue just like that with my own mother just recently. She needed medication. She had been on it for 8 months. They had to reauthorize it after the first of the year.

I asked: Well, is there another issue she could have?

They said: Well, this is the only one on the formulary.

PBMs don't control pricing; PBMs don't control what drugs come to market. Another falsehood. PBMs substitute expensive drugs and overcharge Medicare part D, TRICARE, and FEHB programs. This means they are lining their pockets with money from the taxpayers.

Fourth thing:

If drugstores like those terms, they can sign a contract; and if they don't, they can join with some other plan or PBM.

Oh, I love this. This is classic, Mr. Speaker. PBMs hold a disproportionate share of the marketplace. We have already talked about three of the largest PBMs own 80 percent of the market—80 percent. Because PBMs have a stranglehold on the market, community pharmacists cannot stay in business without being forced to contract with them. It forces community pharmacists to sign take-it-or-leave-it contracts with anticompetitive and unfair provisions, and from transmitting it without written consent. These are just crazy.

I had—one of my pharmacists who was on their plan actually had a letter sent to their customers who said: You are no longer on the plan.

He called the PBM. The PBM said: No, you are still on the plan.

He said: Then why did you send a letter out?

PBM said: Oops, must have been a mistake.

He said: Well, why don't you send a letter out telling them that they are wrong?

PBM said: Oh, we don't do that. That is on you.

Yeah, because all you want to do is keep the money, follow the money.

Mark, it is easy. I understand running a trade association is tough, but at least be honest about it.

The last thing. Community pharmacists typically get paid more by plans because there is not as much competition. Well, five for five. Community pharmacists in northeast Georgia and across the United States are under constant threat of going out of business because of PBMs. PBMs exploit the market, prey upon community pharmacists, using spread pricing and retroactive DIR fees. PBMs also use a disproportionate share of the market to steer patients to pharmacies they own themselves.

The Prescription Drug Price Transparency Act is vitally important to improving fairness and transparency in the healthcare system. Community pharmacists must be kept in business and patients should have the choice to receive care from their local pharmacists. Community pharmacists might be afraid to stand up to PBMs. Community pharmacists many times are basically scared into submission.

I have stood on the floor of this House many times. My pharmacists can't speak, but I can, and I will remind the PBMs one more time: You can't audit me. You can go audit for profit, which you do every day. You can go hit them, but you can't hit me.

I will continue to be a voice for community pharmacists. These Members are being a voice for community pharmacists. Our numbers are rising every day. The President himself has actually begun to look at those middlemen and those pricing.

Tonight ends another night of telling the truth when the truth needs to be told. Mr. Speaker, we end another time of standing up for the American people and the community pharmacists.

I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: REACTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, today I stand here for this Special Order on behalf of our Congressional Progressive Caucus, and we have decided that we would like to use this Special Order hour to address our reactions to the President's address to the Union last night.

Before I offer my part of those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN), my friend and colleague.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman JAYAPAL. She has been a sensational leader within the Democratic Caucus and within the Congressional Progressive Caucus, especially on the issues of immigration and the rights of refugees. It is such an honor to be able to serve with her. I appreciate being able to spend some moments just reflecting on what took place in our Chamber last night with the President's speech.

We should start by giving credit where credit is due. This speech was not "American Carnage II." It was a vast improvement, I would say, over all of the violent and apocalyptic imagery and rhetoric that we saw in the inaugural address. So hats off to the President's new speech writer, whoever that may be.

However, having said that, I think it is simply old wine in a new bottle. The same basic extremist Steve Bannon infrastructure governed that address despite the fact that the manners had improved considerably.

□ 1945

When I thought about President Trump's speech in this Chamber last night, I thought about George Orwell. Not because of 1984, although I admit that my well-thumbed copy of this great dystopian novel is sitting on my desk right now and the words "war is peace" and "ignorance is strength" have been running through my mind over the last several weeks. No, I thought of Orwell not because of 1984, but because of a great essay he once wrote called "Notes on Nationalism."

In this essay, George Orwell contrasted patriotism and nationalism—two concepts that often get conflated. But at least, in his view, they represented two very different things. Patriotism, he argued, was a positive emotion, a passionate belief in one's own community—its people, its institutions, its values, its history, its culture.

An American patriot today, I would argue, believes in our magnificent constitutional democracy—our Constitution; our Bill of Rights; our judiciary and our judges; our States and our communities; our poets like Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman and Langston Hughes and Merrill Leffler; our philosophers like John Dewey and Ralph Waldo Emerson; our extraordinary dynamic culture which invites and absorbs new waves of people from all over the world, our artists, our musicians like Bruce Springsteen, the Neville Brothers, and Dar Williams. All of these people and things are what we love about America, and they evoke the positive emotion of patriotism.

Patriotism is all about uplifting people; drawing on what is best in our history; finding what is best in our culture; invoking our Founders, Madison,

Jefferson, Franklin, and Tom Paine; invoking the people who founded the country once again through the Civil War and the reconstruction amendments, Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass; the people who transformed America in the women's suffrage movement, like Susan B. Anthony; the people who remade America once again in the civil rights movement, like Martin Luther King, Bob Moses, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; the people who blew the doors off of discrimination and oppression against other groups, like the LGBT community, like Harvey Milk.

All of these people stand for a progressive dynamic and inclusive concept of America, and patriots want to draw on this culture in history in order to continue to make great progress for our people today. A patriot wants to improve the health of our people, the education of our people, the critical thinking skills of our people, the well-being of America.

Now, nationalism is different. If you look at it historically as Orwell did, nationalism has been not about building people up and improving their lives, it has been about militarizing society and getting everyone to sync their individuality, their creative personality into a large corporatist and authoritarian state, one that is destined to exploit people's goodwill by mobilizing them for groupthink and endless hostility in war, the kind that Orwell dramatized so frightfully in 1984 and in "Animal Farm."

Well, I am sorry to say that I didn't see a lot of patriotism in Orwell's terms in the speech last night. Ninety percent of our kids go to public schools, but 90 percent of this President's energy and administration's energy seems to go into maligning and defunding public education and diverting public money away from public schools into private education. That is the Betsy DeVos agenda.

Or take health care. The Affordable Care Act represents a magnificent national investment in health care of our own people. More than 22 million of our fellow citizens, previously uninsured, got health care because of the ACA. Thirty million if you include the expansion of Medicaid that took place under the ACA.

If you decide to go to a town hall, yours or someone else's, you will meet people who will tell you that their lives were saved because of the Affordable Care Act—victims of breast cancer and colon cancer and heart attacks and strokes and on and on. These things are just in the nature of life. We are all subject to medical misfortune. If you learn you have cancer or if you have a heart attack, that is a misfortune. It happens to people every day. But if you have cancer or leukemia or you have a heart attack and you can't get health coverage because you lost your job or because you are too poor, that is not just a misfortune, that is an injustice because we can do something about

that. Because that has to do with how we have organized our own affairs as a society.

But what did we hear from the President last night about the health care and well-being of our people? Repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. They voted more than 50 times to repeal the Affordable Care Act and never once to replace it. They have got no plan. The President did not offer a plan.

The President restated the values of the Affordable Care Act itself. And understand, the Affordable Care Act was the compromise because the logical thing to have done, as President Obama said, if we were starting from scratch, would be to adopt a single payor plan. But because we were along a certain path, he felt we couldn't do that.

So he took the plan that was adopted at The Heritage Foundation, the conservative think tank, the one that was put in in Massachusetts by Governor Romney—RomneyCare. That is the Affordable Care Act. But they couldn't tolerate that because they cared more about scoring political points against the President than they did about actually making health care available to as many Americans as possible.

So the President showed up empty-handed again. No plan whatsoever. If there were a plan, we would be debating it. If they had something to offer, we would be talking about it. But they don't have it. They just want to repeal and consign everybody back to medical oblivion. Millions of people going back to not having it. Making everybody else's insurance premiums skyrocket and just turning our backs on the families that now depend on the Affordable Care Act.

Now, I will say the President mentioned in passing something that he made a big deal of during the campaign, and I was happy he did. He went back to saying that we needed to give the government the authority to negotiate with the large drug companies, the prescription drug companies, for lower prices.

And I was happy to hear my colleagues from the other side of the aisle in talking about the pharmacist just now, also talking about the extraordinary power of the pharmaceutical companies and their predatory practices.

Well, what the President has said makes perfect sense on this point, which is there was some special interest legislation that came out several years ago saying that the government could not negotiate for lower prices with the drug companies when it comes to Medicare. We do it with Medicaid, we do it with VA drug benefits, but we can't do it for Medicare drug benefits because some lobbyist was able to get somebody to stick that into the bill, and the GOP majority stands by it now.

And so I appeal to the President, if you are serious about it, I will work

day and night to get every Democratic vote I can to side with you in giving the government the authority to negotiate for lower drug prices. That is a common ground agenda. Let's do that.

But as to the general picture of health care in the country, the President gave us nothing last night. We also got no jobs plan. We got no plan to confront the shameful inequality in our society.

When the President and his Cabinet entered the Chamber last night, the net worth of this room went up by \$9.6 billion. This is the richest Cabinet in American history. These 17 people in the Cabinet have more wealth than 43 million American households combined. That is one-third of American households. When you look at the Trump Cabinet, you can see the net worth of one-third of American families together.

And the President, who campaigned like a crusading populist, like William Jennings Bryan, for working people, creates a Cabinet of billionaires and CEOs, people who profited like mad from NAFTA and all the trade deals that the President now denounces. He closed his campaign by railing against Goldman Sachs. But Goldman Sachs may as well be the nickname of this Cabinet. From Secretary Tillerson to Steve Bannon and many others, Goldman Sachs is all over this administration.

And last night, we also got more immigrant bashing. And I know my friend and colleague, Congresswoman JAYAPAL, will discuss this.

How patriotic is immigrant bashing? I would say not very. Tom Paine said America would be a haven of refuge for people fleeing political and religious repression all over the world. Madison said it would be a sanctuary for religious and political refugees. America would come to be symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. "Give us your poor, your tired, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," that is the spirit of America.

We are a nation of immigrants. Other than Native Americans, we were here before everybody else got here. And the slaves were brought here against their will. But everybody else, we are immigrants or we are the descendants of immigrants. So if you attack immigrants, you are really attacking the dynamic and inclusive culture of America, a community of communities.

And then there is the big proposal we got to slash \$56 billion in domestic spending and put it into a great big, new military buildup. And here we see the fingerprints, of course, of Steve Bannon. We could destroy the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institutes of Health, the State Department, the Peace Corps, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Election Commission, the CFPB, and on

and on, and still not come close to the \$56 billion that they want to rip out of the domestic priorities of the American people and simply give to the Pentagon. And for what? Why? No one has told us why. What is all of that money going to buy? Who is going to get rich off of all of that money?

Ladies and gentlemen, when you add it all up, this program seems like it partakes of the ultra-nationalist politics that Orwell perceived in authoritarian regimes, not the kind of patriotism that reflects the best in our own Democratic political culture.

The great thing is that Americans are deep patriots. We love our communities. We love our institutions. We love our values. We love our Constitution. We love our Bill of Rights. And we are not going to fall for a right-wing, ultra-nationalist agenda that takes us away from everything that we love.

□ 2000

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished colleague from Maryland for your tremendous work already in these 7 weeks and schooling us all on the Constitution and making sure that we continue to recognize the tremendous responsibility that we have here in this body to protect that Constitution and everything that it stands for.

Last night's State of the Union Address deserves a response for lots of reasons and, unfortunately, none of them are good.

Last night, we heard from this President a toned-down version of his campaign speeches. The speech was well delivered. He stuck to his script. It may be the first major address that he has conducted where he did stick to the script. He had a lot of diligence in that. And he even started with some very necessary recognition of the anti-Semitic acts that have been taking place across the country, and he denounced those acts.

He denounced the killing of an Indian American in Kansas. I, too, am Indian American, and I know that that killing hit home hard for many of us across the country who wonder if we, too, are going to be the targets of hate. The President did say that he denounces hate, that there is no place in this Nation for hate, and that, in fact, we need to do a lot of work to make sure that we preserve this place, this country as a country that is safe for everybody.

Unfortunately, it took a while to get there, and his words belie the rhetoric that he has put out there in the past. In fact, I think that this President has not spoken out against the kind of hate and, in fact, has sometimes said things that encourage his followers to act in ways that simply do not meet the rhetoric that he had yesterday.

The first place that that was so obvious to me was in the space of immigration. Now, I have been an advocate on immigration for many, many years. I have worked across the aisle with friends and colleagues in the U.S. Sen-

ate, in the U.S. House of Representatives. At that time, I was an advocate. But together, we understood the tremendous contributions of immigrants to this country, and we understood that unless you were Native American, that, willing or unwilling, everybody in this country has been an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants.

And so to come into the Chamber and yet again hear the fear-mongering and the characterization of immigrants, undocumented immigrants, as this enormous swath of people who simply all they do is commit crimes is simply a travesty and a disservice to the millions of people across this country who work every day to pick our vegetables, clean our homes, serve us in so many different capacities, as well as to all of those who have come through the legal immigration system, but with many challenges.

You know, it took me 18 years to get my citizenship. I went through visa after visa after visa. I understand the barriers. But for this President to continue to focus on a stereotype of undocumented immigrants as criminals is simply disingenuous, unfair, and, frankly, un-American.

DREAMers and refugees and immigrants and others who have helped build this country were the guests of many of us Democrats in the Chamber. We each brought incredible men and women to join us for the State of the Union; people who we feel demonstrate the resilience and the strength and the courage of immigrants across this country.

I was proud to be joined by an amazing woman, a good friend named Aneelah Afzali, who is the executive director of the American Muslim Empowerment Network, an initiative of the Muslim Association of Puget Sound. Aneelah is a Harvard-trained lawyer. She is an incredible snowboarder. She is a 12th Man Fan. She loves the Seahawks, and she is a strong advocate for a community that has been, frankly, terrorized since the passing of the President's Muslim ban. Now, of course, courts have said that that ban is unconstitutional.

The President seems to be accepting that it is unconstitutional, but we also know that he has reshaped that ban to continue to target people simply for the country from which they come, simply for the region that they come from.

The reason we invited all of those guests to be here in the Chamber with us is because we wanted to send a message to this President and to our country that we are strong as a country because of our diversity, that we are better for the perspectives and the values that people bring, and regardless of what religion you are, we all, as the President said yesterday, do bleed the same blood, and we all believe in the promise of the United States of America.

We wanted the President to understand and our colleagues in this body

to understand, when we pass laws, when we approve of executive orders, to target people simply based on religion or place of origin, that we are doing a tremendous disservice to this country and we might be violating constitutional laws in some of these cases, but that America deserves better in terms of how we position what immigrants have done for this country.

Now, the President last night kept talking about these heinous crimes that immigrants commit. In fact, he had some people here in the Chamber, his guests, who were tragically affected by the murder of individuals in their families who were killed because of a single, undocumented immigrant. A heinous crime committed by an undocumented immigrant is simply not representative of the millions of law-abiding immigrants across our country.

This is a continuation of what the President did during the campaign: fear-mongering and otherizing people. The reality is that, just like Dylann Roof's horrific murders in South Carolina cannot be representative of all Caucasian Americans, there is no way that one undocumented immigrant or even a couple of undocumented immigrants can be representative of 11 million who have served this country, helped build our economy, helped drive our industries, and who contribute so much to our country every single day.

The President also seemed to paint this picture of immigrants as driving up crime, that when you have undocumented immigrants, then you have higher crime. In fact, the statistics show that immigrants commit crimes at far lower rates than native-born Americans and that our sanctuary cities, the cities around the country that have policies that are friendly to immigrant communities, including undocumented immigrants, that those actually are safer as cities than comparable cities that are not sanctuary cities.

That was a report that came out, and it is an important one for people to understand. Why? Because, when you have trust and when you understand that the fix that we need is for a system that is broken, an immigration system that has been broken for a very long time, the way to address these issues is not to criminalize and otherize and fearmonger about people who are trying to help our country, but to actually get to work on a real fix for our immigration system.

I was initially pleased that the President talked about fixing a broken immigration system, but then he said we are going to look at a merit-based system. Now, I would not have been able to come to this country under a merit-based system because I came here by myself when I was 16 years old. My parents sent me over here. They had very little money in their bank account. They used their \$5,000 to send me by myself because they felt like this was the place I was going to get the best education.

And if you look at a merit-based system, what you do is you exclude the millions of people who have actually come to the United States seeking refuge from famine, from devastation, from drought, from persecution. You exclude all of those people. You also exclude all of the families who are trying to reunite with their loved ones when they come here and they bring their spouse or they bring their parent or their child. That whole system of family-based immigration that the United States has built so much of our country around, that, too, would be excluded.

Unfortunately, this President is still not at a place where he has said and embraced the idea of comprehensive immigration reform, an immigration reform that has been, until this point, traditionally bipartisan—68 bipartisan votes in the U.S. Senate in 2013 for a comprehensive immigration bill that would have brought \$1.5 trillion into our economy over the next 10 years by legalizing and providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants but, perhaps equally importantly, would have provided the dignity and respect to undocumented immigrants in a very different way than what the President spoke about last night.

My colleague Mr. RASKIN talked a little bit about health care and the Affordable Care Act, and during his speech, the President, unfortunately, again renewed the theme that the Affordable Care Act has been a disaster. He talked about his ideas for health care, and he said some things that maybe all of us could agree with.

He said that we deserve health care that lowers costs for people. Yes, I would like that. He said that we deserve health care that increases quality of care—absolutely.

But unfortunately, neither the President nor Republicans in this Chamber have offered us a replacement plan. So to repeal the Affordable Care Act which has provided so much benefit to people—more than 20 million Americans gained health care through the Affordable Care Act. But if Republicans succeed in repealing it, 30 million people will lose it.

The 150 million Americans with pre-existing conditions will see their protections stripped away, leaving them vulnerable to a lack of coverage. You cannot protect the most expensive and the most valuable provisions of the Affordable Care Act if you do not continue to keep the pool large enough, full of healthy people, so that those provisions actually become affordable. And you need to ensure that the pool is large enough through the individual mandate.

So we have not seen a plan that improves health care, and it is important that we recognize we have improvements to make. There are too many Americans across the country that still, today, don't have access to health care in the way that we would like

them to. But the solution for that is a Medicare-for-all plan, a public plan that allows us to take profits out of the business of health care. It should not be a business. It should be about making people better. It should be about making people well and not about making corporations rich. That, I think, is a very important piece.

The President said that he would support a plan that would actually provide us with the ability to negotiate for prescription drugs for Medicare. That would bring down the cost for those prescription drugs. I am all in for that plan, and that is why I hope the President supports the bill that was introduced.

Senator CANTWELL introduced a bill yesterday that would allow the United States to import more affordable drugs from Canada while also allowing Medicaid to negotiate drug prices directly, and that would lower the costs for our seniors and for others who rely on those lifelong medications.

I am so proud to have sponsored that same bill in the House. That is the solution that we need to move to is lowering the costs of prescription drugs, lowering the cost of health care, increasing the quality of the care that we provide.

Let's talk about the environment for a minute because the President mentioned yesterday that he cares about clean water and clean air, but at the same time, the President has proposed in reports that have been published in the news that he intends to cut the Environmental Protection Agency by 25 percent, the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Scott Pruitt, our new Secretary of the EPA, has talked about putting in place plans to repeal progress on climate change. The President also signed a rule to essentially roll back progress on the Clean Water Act, and we are talking about cutting agencies and staff of the EPA across the country.

The reality is that we need to be thinking about how we preserve our planet for the next generation. I have got a 20-year-old son and he says to me: Mom, this is one of the most important things you can do is preserve the planet for me and for my kids. That is what we need to do is look at the science of climate change, look at the ways in which we can strengthen our ability to protect the environment, instead of what this President has said he will do, which is to repeal so many of the rules that the Obama administration put in place to make sure that we check the notion that corporations should be able to mine our land, literally and figuratively, for profit while destroying it for the future.

Budget and taxes, this was a really interesting one. One of the most common refrains of President Trump's campaign was that he was going to drain the swamp, and last night he talked about that. He said he promised he would do it, and he is now draining the swamp. He has put a ban on lobbyists.

Unfortunately, what he didn't talk about is that, even with the ban on lobbyists, it is as if he is draining that swamp and then pumping it into another spot, which happens to be his Cabinet, that is filled with people who represent Goldman Sachs ties, the CEO of ExxonMobil, plenty of other elites who—we don't begrudge people to make some money, but these are people who have made profit off of a vast majority of Americans losing their income.

□ 2015

These are people, frankly, who lobbied the United States Government so that those corporations could do better and so that they, as CEOs, could do better while caring not at all for the broad interests of people across this country.

Based on these picks, it is clear that the President's priority is for the wealthiest in our country and not, as he promised over and over again, for the working people in our country.

Now, I would love to be proven wrong on this. But unfortunately, all of the tax plans, all of the proposals that we have seen so far, or, at least, the blueprints that we have seen so far would not do as he said last night. Last night, he said he wants to provide a huge tax cut or tax relief for middle class families. We would love to see that. Unfortunately, the plan looks, in fact, like it is going to provide relief to the top tier of income earners in this country and not to the middle class.

He has talked about a \$54 billion cut in domestic spending, and I wanted to have people understand exactly what \$54 billion amounts to because most of us don't really know. We can't really imagine that because we don't have \$54 billion lying around.

If we added up the entire budget for the Environmental Protection Agency, the entire budget of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the entire budget for the National Park Service—and I should give you these numbers because they are interesting: \$8 billion for the EPA, \$5.85 billion for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, \$3.1 billion for the National Park Service, \$2.9 billion for the Department of Energy efficiency and renewable energy program, \$1.6 billion for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and \$1.2 billion for the U.S. Geological Service—you still don't get to that \$54 billion. There are a whole bunch of others that are in that list. You still don't get to \$54 billion, even if you remove all of those agencies.

So the work that we have to do is really to have people understand that if we are going to cut nondefense discretionary spending by the amount that he is talking about increasing our defense budget by, our military spending by, then you are going to have to cut into the very programs that help middle class families to continue their lives and have dignity, respect, pull themselves up and know that they are

going to have food on the table and a roof over their head and be able to send their kids to college and be able to retire in security. All of these programs help people to do that, to have opportunity in this country, which is why America is such a great country because we provide that kind of opportunity. But if we decimate our non-defense discretionary spending by cutting it by \$54 billion, then we are taking away that opportunity from millions and millions of families. This is not how we build up our communities.

Our budget is a demonstration of our values as a country. We have to understand that this is a time of tremendous insecurity for Americans across our country. Wealth inequality is at the highest level that it has been in a very long time, and people do not see the opportunity for themselves.

They elected this President, in part, because of the promises that he made; and so if he is going to follow through, that would mean protecting those social safety net programs. It would mean investing in the environment for the future. It would mean expanding Social Security and Medicare. It would mean saying that the answer to health care is actually a Medicare-for-all program, a way to make sure that every American does not have to be one healthcare crisis away from bankruptcy.

The President also talked about education last night, and he said it is the civil rights issue of our time. I couldn't agree with him more, but I do not understand how you go from that place to then saying that the answer to that is school choice.

Ninety percent of the kids in this country go through the public education system. That is what my son went through. We need to make sure that we preserve the ability for people in this country to send their kids to good public schools.

We should be investing in our public schools, investing in our teachers, making sure that we provide the tools and the resources to teachers so that in our public schools—the place where our kids are going to spend the most amount of their days—that they are getting the kind of education that allows them to earn a future, contribute back to the country, be trained for all the jobs that we need to fill right here in the United States of America.

We should be investing in preapprenticeship programs. We should be investing in debt-free college for all of our young people because it is ridiculous that a young person has to choose between being \$45,000 in debt or not going to college, not seeking a higher education.

Higher education is what gave me everything that I have today. It was my parents' belief in me and my future and the \$5,000 that they had in the bank that they used to send me here so that I could get a college degree. I was 16 years old, and now I have the tremendous honor of standing in this Cham-

ber, the U.S. House of Representatives, in the greatest country in the world, going from being an immigrant to being a United States Representative.

I want every American—no matter what color you are, no matter whether you are rural or urban, no matter whether you have money or don't have money—I want you to have a great public education that you can go to. That is choice. That is real choice.

Choice is not privatizing our public education system, and then saying, hey, 10 percent of the people get to go to that, and then everybody else is going to go to schools that don't give them that opportunity.

Real choice is about having an investment in our public education system as the doorway, the gateway to a future of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the most important thing I think is that last night's address was a softer tone. It was a disciplined speech, and there were some good statements.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric of last night doesn't match the actions. It doesn't match the executive actions of the last 7 weeks that have thrown this country into chaos on immigration. It doesn't match the fact that we still don't have a replacement plan that will make things better for health care, not increase payments, not give giveaways to insurance companies, not decrease subsidies so that health care can be affordable.

His speech last night did not reflect specifics around how he is going to accomplish some of the good things that he said he was going to do. And it continued to put fear into people's hearts and minds about who our neighbors are, about the immigrants across this country who have done so much to build and contribute.

He is the President of the United States. He has a remarkable microphone. He talked about unity last night. But unity means being a President for everybody, and it means not creating stories that somehow draw pictures of an immigrant community that is full of crime, inner cities that are full of crime. That is not the inner cities that I know. If he is talking about inner cities in Chicago and other places, we should be talking about how to fix crime, but not calling everybody who lives there criminals.

We have got to understand that our country deserves a body in this Chamber, in this United States Congress that really preserves the opportunity, the dreams, and the ability for everybody in our country to know that they have got a fair shot. That is what America has been for so long for so many people across the world.

When he talks about improving the vetting of refugees to this country, let me tell you, I know a lot about this issue. There are 20 steps you have to go through if you want to be vetted into this country as a refugee. All of our multiple intelligence agencies, multiple agencies in other countries, the

United Nations and others are involved in that vetting process. Our own intelligence agencies vet people.

Out of the seven countries that he put on the list for the Muslim ban, the 9/11 hijackers didn't come from any of those countries. They came from another country that is not on that list: Saudi Arabia.

So if we are really going to think about how we improve our security in this country, we should be thinking about economic security that gives people the opportunity that they need in this country, the ability to fill our jobs with well-trained folks from this country, and then we continue to allow immigrants to come in as we need them. But don't allow them to come in because we are not training enough people and we are not investing in people right here in this country and then criticize those immigrants for taking these jobs.

Let's raise our wages. Let's invest in apprenticeships. That is good in rural areas, and that is good in urban areas. Let's invest in our community and technical colleges. Let's provide opportunity for people who are ready to take that opportunity.

Let's be compassionate. It is Ash Wednesday today. I am not an observing Catholic, but I think today—because I went to a Jesuit university—and I think today of what we were taught in that university about compassion.

I think it is time for us to recognize that true greatness for our country doesn't come from fear mongering. It doesn't come from otherizing. You can tap into that. You can mobilize people around that. You can enrage people around that.

Ultimately, true greatness and the greatness of this country has always come from our ability to have a vision of opportunity for everybody and to actually work to perfect this Union, to actually work to make democracy real, to actually work to engage people in a vision that says we are all better off when we are all better off. That means that my boat rising lifts your boat rising. It is not about fighting over the spoils that are too small for us anyway. It is not about whose pie we are eating.

It is about having more pie for everybody and ultimately opportunity, education, jobs, higher wages, health care, paid family leave, the ability for people to live with dignity and respect, racial justice, all of the fights that this country has been having for a very long time. Some we have won, and some we have won a little bit on, and some we have won a lot on. We still have a ways to go.

What I hope we do, as we think about the state of the Union of this country, is understand that our state of the Union is strong when our communities are strong. Our state of the Union is strong when we invest in our future.

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

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY NEBRASKA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for 30 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, for 150 years now, Nebraska has held a special place in the history of America. We Nebraskans rightly pride ourselves on the values of hard work, on the values of community life, on the proper value of the good stewardship of our precious resources. The mystique of the Great Plains, the nobility of the family farm, and the vibrancy of our people create the conditions for the good life.

Our story is one of strength, it is one of dignity, and I am proud to celebrate our 150th anniversary.

□ 2030

Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago, a gift of land donation enabled the expansion of the Homestead National Monument, which is near Beatrice, Nebraska. Run by the National Park Service, their personnel were kind enough to invite me to the dedication ceremony; and during that event, a young woman who was from a seventh-generation farm family—in high school at that time, as I recall—got up to speak. She gave a beautiful talk about our Nebraska values, our connectedness to the land, the deeper meaning of living on the plains, and the ideal of maintaining the continuity of family life.

Her remarks, Mr. Speaker, moved me so much that I literally tossed my own speech aside and spoke off the cuff, and I said something like this: Perhaps it was on a day just like this where that settler family came over the hill there, and they looked at the great expansion of the plains before them.

Perhaps that day they felt the warm, spring sun on their cheeks, and they heard the chirp of the western meadowlark in the air, and they watched as the beautiful bluestem prairie grass swayed in the wind. Perhaps it was then that they made their decision: We stay right here. Nebraska will be our home.

Mr. Speaker, when I finished that, I was very proud of myself, so I sat down. And then the next speaker came up, another political figure, and he had this to say: Well, my family came here because they were horse thieves. We all shared a little laugh, but really, Mr. Speaker, Nebraska's colorful history and droll wit were simultaneously captured in that moment.

Nebraska's official motto is "Equality before the law," but our unofficial

motto is "Nebraska nice." It is true. Nebraskans are generally nice. But beneath that friendly veneer is an unmistakable, unvarnished realism.

Nebraskans have a unique ability to look at a situation and size it up accurately, if often humorously. "Git r done" is an often-used phrase that I think can be safely attributable to us.

Now, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, Nebraska has been pejoratively described in the popular imagination of our country, first as the "Great American Desert" because it was thought that nothing would grow there. Today, we have the largest amount of acreage under irrigation in the country, including the fact that we are the largest grower of popcorn in America. We are a leader in livestock production and multiple types of commodity production, as well as specialty crops.

We were sometimes castigated as "flyover country." I hear that around here sometimes, that is, until you come to Nebraska and realize that it is a wonderful place to live and to work and to raise a family relatively free from crime, except even horse thieves, congestion, as well as pollution.

Nebraska has, routinely, the highest graduation rate in the country and the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

And, though, in true Nebraska fashion, self-effacing Cornhuskers would cringe at the term, we have had our fair share of celebrities as well, including Father Ed Flanagan, who founded Boys Town, now known as Boys Town and Girls Town; Civil Rights pioneers, Chief Standing Bear being one of the most prominent; Malcolm X; authors Mari Sandoz and Willa Cather; professional athletes Bob Gibson and Gale Sayers; and entertainers, Henry Fonda, Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Johnny Carson, and Dick Cavett.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, our singular, unicameral legislature is a model for bipartisanship and frugality. And I would be remiss if I didn't say our run-it-up-the-gut offense with a few option twists, it may not have been flashy, but it helped the University of Nebraska's football team win five national championships.

I am proud to serve in the United States congressional seat once held by Williams Jennings Bryan, who along with Senator George Norris perhaps are the most famous, though controversial in some ways, politicians in our State's history.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Nebraska's admission to the United States of America—by the way, the first State admitted after the Civil War—I recall Representative Bryan's words from over 100 years ago. It is a quote that actually is outside of our football stadium, known as Memorial Stadium, on Tom and Nancy Osborne Field. It says this: "Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved."

And perhaps, Mr. Speaker, we can add to that quote today: And that the choice to be good makes the destiny arrive well.

Happy birthday, Nebraska.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 37 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 2, 2017, at 9 a.m.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself and Mr. MASSIE):

H.R. 1265. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to make modifications to the passenger facility charge program administered by the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. BLUMENAUER (for himself and Mr. BUCHANAN):

H.R. 1266. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to assist units of local government in developing and implementing plans, known as Vision Zero plans, to eliminate transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. SMITH of Missouri (for himself, Mr. KIND, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Ms. SINEMA):

H.R. 1267. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to treat certain amounts paid for physical activity, fitness, and exercise as amounts paid for medical care; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. SMITH of Nebraska (for himself, Mr. KIND, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. YOHO, Mr. ABRAHAM, Ms. JENKINS of Kansas, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. HARPER, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, and Mrs. DAVIS of California):

H.R. 1268. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an exclusion for assistance provided to participants in certain veterinary student loan repayment or forgiveness programs; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. LAMALFA (for himself and Mr. GARAMENDI):

H.R. 1269. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to take actions to support non-Federal investments in water infrastructure