

Chavista thugs accessing our legal immigration system.

The people of Venezuela deserve the American people's support and admiration for their continued fight against the brutal Maduro anti-American regime. Honest and hardworking Venezuelans who would be persecuted or imprisoned unjustly should they return to their country should be allowed the opportunity to take refuge here in the United States.

FLOOD INSURANCE REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the critical issue of reforming and reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program. For my constituents in south Florida and the Florida Keys, and for coastal communities across the country, flood insurance is an absolute necessity to protect against natural disasters. But the program is flawed and saddled with \$23 billion of debt.

We have a unique opportunity in the coming months to address the issues that matter most to our constituents, providing for optimal coverage at rates that are affordable to policyholders and based on accurate flood maps. There are numerous solutions I am studying, such as expanding the use of Write Your Own policies and growing the private insurance market, as long as strict oversight protocols are established and a Federal backstop is in place.

We should also promote stronger building standards for new construction projects that will better withstand flooding and strong winds. In Florida, we are a payee State, a donor State into the NFIP, but have also adopted strong building standards to reduce cleanup costs after the damage of a natural disaster has been done.

As Congress works to reform the NFIP, I will find commonsense solutions with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure our constituents have access to reliable coverage at fair and appropriate rates.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the seven Miami-Dade County schools that were recently named to the USA Today's top 100 public schools in the country, including Archimedean Upper Conservatory Charter School in my own district.

The rankings are based on graduation rates, reading, and math scores on State standardized tests, including how low-income and minority students fared in comparison to the State average, and the number of students taking college-level advanced placement courses and scoring well on the corresponding tests.

As a former Miami-Dade County Public School Board member, I am incredibly proud to see the tremendous growth and success of these schools in south Florida. MDCPS was in the midst of a financial and moral recovery when I was on the board just a few years ago; and during my time there,

we improved the quality of education and put students and teachers first, resulting in major gains in student performance and graduation rates.

Today, Superintendent Carvalho and the board continue to make great progress. The teachers, staff, administrators, and parents at these schools are working to ensure our students have the best education possible.

Congratulations on this honor. I look forward to visiting the Archimedean Owls back home in the very near future.

NEW DETAILS ON IRAN DEAL PRISONER SWAP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PAULSEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, we recently learned troubling details surrounding the terms of the Obama administration's nuclear deal with Iran from early last year. As I have said before, the more details we learn about this deal, the more apparent it is that it was neither prudent nor transparent.

The safety and security of the American people and our allies around the world should remain a top priority for the United States. But we are learning, according to reports, as part of this prisoner swap with Iran in 2016, the Obama administration released seven prisoners and dropped charges and international arrest warrants of 14 fugitives, many of whom had been directly involved in supplying Iran with U.S.-built equipment or sensitive information that could be used for military systems, primarily Iran's nuclear program.

The administration downplayed the security threat that these men posed. In a variety of ways, these individuals deliberately worked to undermine the United States and smuggle American military technology to Tehran.

In one instance, a man was allegedly part of a conspiracy to steal sensitive software information from a defense contractor in Vermont. Another one of the men was in the middle of serving an 8-year prison sentence on charges related to a separate conspiracy to provide satellite technology and hardware to Iran.

Three of the fugitives were allegedly working to lease an aircraft from Boeing for an Iranian airline that authorities say supported Hezbollah, which the United States, of course, has designated as a terrorist organization.

And the list goes on as these are just a few of the cases. All of this poses a serious threat to our national security as sensitive military information and technology could be used to bolster Iran's weapons programs.

As you may recall, this comes after we learned last fall that, as a part of the deal, the United States paid \$400 million that was contingent on Iran releasing four American hostages. This broke from longstanding United States

policy to not pay ransoms to rogue nations because it encourages bad actors like Iran to take more hostages. Again, this was not made known to Congress or the American public. We only learned about it nearly a year after the deal was finalized.

What makes this most concerning or more disconcerting is the Obama administration's lack of transparency on the backgrounds of these prisoners. These are not merely civilians or businessmen, as the President and his officials referred to them on multiple occasions. The administration left the impression that these individuals were nothing more than violators of sanctions and not as dangerous as they truly were. Each of these men pose very real threats that the administration hid from the American people.

This isn't a partisan talking point, Mr. Speaker. Even President Obama's own Justice Department had accused many of these men of being involved in terrorist activities.

I support diplomatic efforts with Iran, and I am hopeful that we can continue to engage in diplomacy and secure a good deal at some point, but this latest news continues to exemplify why both Republicans and Democrats could not and did not support this deal.

Iran continues to push every boundary, exploit every loophole, and avoid as much oversight as possible, all while it is antagonizing the rest of the world. It continues to reap the benefits of this deal at the expense of our national security and that of our allies, such as Israel.

We continue to learn something new and bad about this deal that wasn't shared with Congress or the public. Our national security is too important to put at risk, and no President's legacy is worth taking that risk. This new information validates many of the concerns that led to the bipartisan opposition to the nuclear deal.

RECOGNIZING THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE OF GRETA JOYNES AND CHRIS SARLEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to come down to the floor to recognize and thank two of my major staffers in my office who are leaving to pursue other opportunities. The first one is Greta Joynes.

Greta recently left as my legislative director; and as you know, Mr. Speaker, that is your top adviser in the legislative field. So not only running the legislative office, she also had some personal expertise in the telecommunications regions.

But Greta is from northern Illinois, north of I-80, originally from the Chicagoland area, and is a graduate of Northern Illinois University, NIU. She started as a staff assistant in 2003 and worked her way up through the ranks, as I said, becoming legislative director

in 2011, and then served as deputy chief of staff from 2013 until she left recently in March.

She focused on telecommunications as her expertise, and we primarily in our office dealt with 911 issues, especially the Next Generation 911 Advancement Act. She also spearheaded the Next Generation 911 Caucus in my office.

She is married to Bob and has two children, Gavin and Hadley. We already miss her activity and work in the office, and we pass on best wishes.

Next is Mr. Chris Sarley, who has a 14-year career on Capitol Hill. This is his tenth year with me, and I think it is uncommon in many offices for people to stay that long. I think it is a tribute to my chief of staff, Craig Roberts, and the fact that I don't meddle too much how they manage the office and get their job done.

Chris has served 10 years with me. In addition to handling health care and energy policy in my office, Chris has served the committee under Chairman WALDEN and Chairman Emeritus UPTON as policy coordinator for the Subcommittee on Environment since 2011.

Chris has been an invaluable member of my team, and some of his achievements include:

Before he came to my office, he worked on the Medicare part D rollout.

Under my office, he advanced several medical device titles in the 21st Century Cures Act.

He worked on what we call the ADAPT Act and the GAIN Act, which target the antibiotic threats that hopefully will not occur in our country, but we need to be ready to respond.

He was very involved in ADUFA, Animal Drug User Fee Act, and enabling the FDA to approve drugs used for pets and livestock.

But for all of us on the Energy and Commerce Committee, he was one of our primary House negotiators during the first major rewrite of a United States environmental protection law in over 2 decades, and facilitated passage of the Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, which amends the Toxic Substances Control Act, which is the Nation's primary chemical regulation law.

I think the public really would appreciate if they knew the work that our staff members do on long hours and over the weekends. We mention it all the time, especially when we are fighting across the aisle, because it is primarily the staff that is trying to get to the point where they can share language where we can then give a thumbs up or thumbs down, and it is very seldom that we say thanks for those. A Member is only as good as the folks he has who work for him and who he or she surrounds himself with.

I wanted to take this time, Mr. Speaker, to call out two great government employees who served their Nation well and served me well. And it also sends a signal about all our other staff members who do tremendous

work under great stress to serve this country.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 44 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Rabbi Richard Boruch Rabinowitz, Aish International, New York, New York, offered the following prayer:

May we humbly ask You, God Almighty, to help us focus on the beauty and good of this great country.

God, we thank You for giving wisdom to Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald J. Trump for proclaiming May as Jewish Heritage Month.

The Jewish people of this country are grateful and indebted to You, God, for the opportunity to contribute in making the United States a great nation.

Aish founder, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, of blessed memory, would say to young people: "When older people see your idealism, they might say, 'you'll grow up,' but what they really mean is 'you'll give up.'"

Rabbi Weinberg would say: "Never give up—get tougher instead."

Let us pray for the Members of Congress and this great Nation: God, please grant us clarity and courage to always do right and never give up on our principles.

God bless the United States of America.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

HONORING LYDIA STRUNK

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

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because this is Lydia Strunk's last week working on the House floor.

Before I talk about Lydia, I want to talk about the work that she and all the people here on the floor do for us, for the people's House, on both sides of the aisle. They are the ones who keep the floor running on time on a day-to-day basis. They make sure that the votes are counted and conducted impartially. They make sure that every Member, majority and minority, is treated fairly. And though the hours are long and unpredictable, they always set a fantastic tone of decorum.

No one better exemplifies this professionalism than Lydia Strunk. She has been a part of this institution since 2008, when she started out in the Republican Cloakroom. We all knew her so well then and enjoyed watching her rise to these great responsibilities that she now holds.

For more than 4 years now, Lydia has served as the Speaker's deputy floor director. As it turns out, she accepted this job on the night of her wedding. How is that for commitment?

Lydia's quiet dedication to the people's House comes through in almost everything that she does; and because she does her job so well, almost no one ever notices. Think about it. If you ever wondered how a joint meeting with a foreign leader or a State of the Union goes off without a hitch, it is because of Lydia's doing.

One of her jobs, of course, is to keep us on schedule. So I will make one last point before she tells me to wrap this up, because I assume that is what she will be doing in a minute.

I want to thank Lydia's family. I want to thank Lydia's husband, Jeff, and I want to thank, in particular, her children.

Graham and Evie, I want you to know that your mother is an incredible public servant. She has done so much for us, for this country and this institution, and we are grateful to you for sharing your mom—and your wife—with us. This whole House is in her debt.