

Last year, two Navy destroyers were involved in collisions that tragically claimed the lives of 17 sailors. These ships will undergo repairs for years to come.

I saw this personally in September when I toured the USS *Fitzgerald* in a naval base in Japan. I stood in the room where seven sailors died when their ship collided with a commercial freighter, tearing a hole in the side of the ship and flooding their room where they were sleeping with water in less than 2 minutes, giving them too little time to escape. It was heart-wrenching to see, and it remains heartbreaking to think about the pain these families will endure for years to come.

Perhaps saddest of all is that these accidents were not due to an enemy attack. They were due to training lapses and poor leadership which was exacerbated by high demand for service, combined with a lack of funding for needed ships and a lack of training because of defense cuts.

Last year alone, 80 U.S. servicemembers were killed in readiness-related accidents, nearly four times the number that were killed in hostilities.

Our men and women in uniform deserve better. We owe it to them to provide them with all that they need as they stand ready to actively fight a resurgent Russia, an emergent China, an unstable North Korea, an unpredictable Iran, and widespread violent extremism.

We cannot expect our sons and daughters to volunteer for military service and thereby volunteer to be placed in harm's way without proper equipment and adequate training.

Mr. Speaker, we must end this deadly cycle of continuing resolutions. We must end sequestration and provide for the common defense. We must approve a long-term budget that provides desperately needed increases in funding for the military.

American military superiority is not a God-given right or a law of nature. It has been earned on the backs of a motivated volunteer force. It is our duty to ensure that force is well-equipped and well-trained. The current normal is unacceptable and irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, I call on my colleagues to end this travesty and to stand with our military as they stand for freedom for us every day.

#### A DEVOLUTION IS TAKING PLACE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise and stand in the well of the Congress of the United States of America to address the question of the State of the Union.

What is the State of the Union?

Mr. Speaker, the State of the Union is one of devolution. We are devolving into the normalization of inequality; inequality in a way that allows us to pass a \$1.5 trillion giveaway that will

reward the rich for being rich and punish the poor for being poor.

We are devolving into hyperpartisan political events by the hijacking of a Supreme Court Justice when Justice Gorsuch was appointed to the Supreme Court.

We are evolving and devolving into the hijacking of justice itself because we now find that there are those who believe that there is a deep-state conspiracy within the Justice Department; that somehow there is this belief that the Justice Department should be assaulted and attacked; that it should be demeaned; that it should be discredited.

We are devolving into, Mr. Speaker, the normalization of disqualifying bigotry, as evidenced by some of the statements that have come from the Presidency; statements that would normalize language such as: there are some "fine people" among those who are bigots, racists, and persons perpetrating hate in Charlottesville, as evidenced by the notion that we can allow people to say ugly things about other countries and, in a sense, develop a race-based immigration policy.

Mr. Speaker, we are devolving into a society that recognizes a rising stock market as the acid test for everything when, in fact, it is only proof that some people are doing better while many others are not.

There is a devolution taking place, and I, Mr. Speaker, contend that there is a solution to this devolution. The solution is the impeachment of an unfit President.

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

□ 1030

#### TONIGHT

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

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, tonight I will have the privilege of hearing the State of the Union Address that I have been waiting to hear since I first came to Congress 7 years ago.

Tonight our entire country will hear a confident message of undeniable good news for all Americans—not based on fantasy and hope, but on facts and undeniable success.

Tonight the President of the United States will come to the people's House and speak to a nation that is far better off today than we were just 1 year ago in every measurable way.

Now, this success did not come by accident. Over the past year, by working with a unified Congress, President Trump was able to begin implementing his agenda to Make America Great Again.

Let's revisit what he has done when it comes to accomplishments.

The signing of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act marked the first time our Tax Code was updated in over 31 years. It lowered tax rates for all taxpayers across the board, and it cut the corporate tax rate down from 35 percent to 21 percent which allows us to compete globally. It permanently repealed ObamaCare's individual mandate. It opened up ANWR for drilling and brand new energy exploration.

When it comes to deregulation, he signed 15 CRA bills into law in less than a year, imposed a groundbreaking rule on the Federal bureaucracy to kill two regulations for every new regulation written, and has rolled back more job-killing red tape than every President before him combined.

When it comes to the courts, by appointing conservatives like Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court and a historic number to the appellate courts, he is restoring constitutionalism and common sense to our judiciary system. These appointments will reverberate for generations to come.

Now, when it comes to the outcomes, the entire stock market is at an all-time high. Contrary to what some people will speak, this affects the pensions of all Americans. Female unemployment is at its lowest level since 2001. Black and Hispanic unemployment are at their lowest levels ever. For 13 different States, overall unemployment is at its lowest rate since we first began recording it.

New manufacturing orders are increasing at their fastest pace in 14 years. Quarterly GDP is exceeding expectations and is on track for a 3 percent annual growth rate for the first time in 13 years. Consumer confidence is at its highest level since 2000. Job market confidence is at its highest level ever, and because of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act alone, more than 3 million American workers—and counting—are receiving \$1,000 bonuses, or more, wage increases, and/or benefit increases. Now, in my own city that I live in, NexTier Bank gave over 250 of its associates a \$1,000 bonus. Those are hardly crumbs when it comes to hard-working American taxpayers.

Abroad, the Islamic State—once thought to be unstoppable—is now shattered. Military morale, recently at rock bottom, is now soaring. Our troops are currently receiving their largest pay raise in 8 years.

When it comes to liberty and conscience issues, we ended the war on religious liberty. We tore up the so-called HHS contraceptive mandate; no more nuns fighting for their survival in the Supreme Court; and we reinstated the Mexico City policy the first weekend in office.

When it comes to energy, we ended the war on coal, we stopped the EPA's so-called Clean Power Plan, we approved both the Keystone XL and Dakota pipelines, and we have plans in place to dramatically expand offshore drilling.

When it comes to American leadership, we pulled out of the Paris climate accord, we ended the Cuba appeasement, we condemned and decertified the Iran deal, and Guantanamo Bay is still open with no threat of closing.

By changing the rules of engagement, trusting our generals, and unleashing our military might, he has overseen the total destruction of the ISIS caliphate. The entire world is safer because of American leadership. Through his words and deeds—most recently with Jerusalem—the world sees America leading with moral clarity and confidence again.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I will have the privilege of hearing the State of the Union that I have been waiting to hear for 7 years. Tonight we will look at an economy and a State of the Union that is as strong as Pittsburgh steel.

Our economy is roaring, and America's optimism is soaring. Our citizens are becoming more prosperous. Our law enforcement is becoming empowered and not undermined. Our military is growing stronger by the day. Our international credibility is being restored. Our friends, once again, trust us; and our enemies, once again, fear us. The whole world knows that we will also put America first.

But this is just the start. There is still much work left to be done. But as of today, the facts say it all: America is winning again.

#### MILITARY PAYCHECKS

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is nice to have the United States economy starting to win again. It was a great tribute to the President's leadership that we got a tax bill done that is already reaping fantastic benefits for so many across the country.

It is rather amazing to see people in some parts of the media who have taken surveys already to see if people have benefited from a tax bill that actually applies to the taxes due at the end of this year even before they get their February paycheck that will actually reflect those savings. But I guess if your goal is to undermine the President at every turn rather than to be fair and impartial media, that is the kind of thing you do in January. You do it quickly before individuals have a chance to say and know how much the tax bill will improve their lives.

It is also rather amazing to hear people from this body refer to a \$1,000 bonus as crumbs. One would think you would have to basically be a multimillionaire to think of \$1,000 as crumbs. But for those of us who cashed out most everything we had in order to come be a servant in Congress, \$1,000 is still a lot of money. It will pay a lot of bills. It is good for American families and individuals that they are able to do that.

I do want to call attention to something that my friend, Mrs. HARTZLER,

referenced, and that is the threat of paychecks not coming to our military when they are in harm's way protecting our very freedoms that allow us to debate and push through legislation.

Going back to 2011, I saw the military used as pawns in order to force—or try to force—Republicans to vote for a bad continuing resolution that broke many of our promises. I had encouraged the Speaker, at that time, that we needed to do something to make sure that our military—the military pay—was treated as our Social Security paychecks were treated where they are on automatic pilot, and even if there is a shutdown, those checks continue to go out.

I know that is a surprise to some of our seniors because, in the last administration, the President and others continually told people that, if there was a shutdown, the Social Security checks would not be going out. Unfortunately, that was just a problem of ignorance, and, of course, there is no House rule that objects to our pointing out ignorance of a fact. But the fact is Social Security checks go out automatically. If someone is entitled to an increase in their Social Security check, that does not occur until after the shutdown is over.

After I saw that the Republican Speaker, back in 2011, after being warned that we shouldn't use our military pay as leverage to get people to vote for a bill that they shouldn't vote for, I actually filed a bill before that CR came due that would ensure that the military was paid as Social Security. If you are entitled to a promotion or additional pay, that doesn't come until the shutdown is over.

That bill has again been filed in this Congress. The name is the ASAP bill, Armed Services Always Paid. We need to go ahead and bring that bill to the floor, push the Senate to do the same thing, and put our military's pay on automatic pilot. They would never have to worry.

Having served in the military, in the U.S. Army, for 4 years, I know our military is being paid better than we were back when I was on Active Duty. But even still, I know too many in our military who are barely getting by on what they are paid. The last thing they need is to be in harm's way dodging bullets or IEDs or rocket-propelled grenades and have to be worrying whether their loved ones back in the United States are going to have the check so that they can pay their car payment and their home payment.

Let's pass this ASAP bill immediately.

#### 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 40 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

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day.

As You make available to Your people the grace and knowledge to meet the needs of the day, we pray that Your spirit will be upon the Members of this people's House, giving them the richness of Your wisdom.

Bless the Members of the majority party as they prepare and gather these next days. May they, with those who accompany them, travel safely and meet in peace.

Bless also the minority party as they prepare for their own gathering. May these days be filled with hopeful anticipation.

Bless also the President as he visits the people's House to address the Nation this evening.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

#### 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.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. PANETTA 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.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

#### AMERICANS ARE BETTER OFF

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the differences are stark between President Obama's first year in office and President Trump's first year in office. If you just listen to the liberal media, you would think our country is worse off under President Trump. However, if you follow the facts, Americans are far better off.