

and across the Nation. An employer in my district shared with me how the new 100 percent expensing provision has helped their customers afford more of the products they sell, which has, in turn, boosted their business.

Each time I return to my district, I hear about the different ways families and businesses are utilizing savings from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Delivering on these reforms was long overdue, but the tax reform is truly working for the American people. After more than 30 years, Americans are finally able to reap the benefits of a simplified Tax Code that cuts middle class taxes and supports expanding businesses. I am thrilled to see the continued success of tax reform and am eager to see more lasting changes that will strengthen our workforce and economy.

HONORING FOREIGN NATIONAL EMPLOYEES

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

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and thank the thousands of foreign national employees who work for United States Embassies overseas supporting our Foreign Service and promoting democratic ideals throughout the world.

Many Americans may not know exactly what the Foreign Service does both at home and abroad, but I can assure you that our diplomats are out every day promoting the interests of the United States, our constituents, our businesses, and our values.

Last August, I invited Ambassador Barbara Stephenson, president of the American Foreign Service Association, to Minnesota Farm Fest, a trade and policy forum that brings together about 40,000 people out on the rich soils near Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Her message was simple yet important: the work our Foreign Service officers do throughout the globe has a direct and substantial impact on the citizens of this great Nation—in that case, promoting export markets and food safety throughout the world so that the world's greatest producers of food and fuel and fiber are able to find those markets and able to grow our economies.

But what often goes unnoticed are the thousands of foreign national employees who work at U.S. Embassies in support of our diplomats as they build and strengthen democratic institutions, create and sustain markets for American products, and promote democracy in some of the most hostile, austere environments in the world.

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These dedicated professionals are called LESes among the Foreign Service, Locally Engaged Staff. And that is exactly what they are. They are engaged locally in a way that is simply not possible, even for the most expert

of American diplomats. They are that engaged because they are from the country they work in. And it is this understanding that only people native to a country can have, which makes them critical to the success of our diplomats and America's mission overseas.

I would like to tell you about one such unsung hero of the State Department's mission in Havana, Cuba. Olexis Lugo was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1966, and worked for the U.S. Interests Section, and later, the U.S. Embassy in Havana for more than a decade. Lugo, as he was known to diplomat colleagues, was a driver in the embassy's motor pool and supported countless missions with U.S. diplomats.

More than a driver, Lugo aided diplomats in understanding the nuances of Cuban culture, and provided critical insight that helped our diplomats do their jobs effectively. And more than that, Lugo was a friend and confidant to all of the U.S. diplomats posted in Havana, and a friend to America.

This past year, Lugo suddenly passed away in Havana, but his legacy will live on in the American lives he touched and the ideals of democracy and freedom that he helped support. I hope when it comes time to talk about our Foreign Affairs budget, we will remember our diplomats and the folks from foreign countries, like Lugo, who are working hard for the American people to keep this world safe for democracy.

WORKFARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COMER). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HOLDING) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, we must reform our Nation's welfare programs.

President Ronald Reagan once remarked: "The Federal Government declared war on poverty, and poverty won." Unfortunately, his assessment remains all too accurate to this day. Over the past five decades, the United States Government has spent more than \$22 trillion on welfare, only to see the poverty rate remain unchanged.

Mr. Speaker, to solve this problem, we must first properly diagnose the cause. Too often, Washington's prescribed cure is yet another government program or increased spending on existing programs. However, we already have 13 Federal agencies running more than 80 Federal programs that provide food, housing, healthcare, job training, education, energy assistance, and cash to low-income Americans. And we should not gauge the success of our war on poverty by how much is spent, but on how many people are actually able to get out of poverty. That is the point.

The root cause of the failed "war on poverty" is that the structure of our current welfare system entrenches a culture of dependency rather than promoting a path to self-sufficiency.

Overwhelming evidence supports what should be a commonsense conclu-

sion: that there is a direct correlation between work and poverty. For example, before Congress reformed the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program to incorporate a strict work requirement, there were 4.9 million families on the rolls of this program. Two decades later, thanks to these workfare reforms, we have seen 3.3 million families come off of the welfare rolls. Now, that is a success.

In my home State of North Carolina, reforms to unemployment insurance benefits led an increase in both employment and labor force participation. Later research has found that Congress' decision in 2013 to not extend Federal unemployment benefits resulted in 1.8 million new jobs nationwide the following year.

Furthermore, in 2014, when Maine began enforcing strict work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents receiving food stamps, their caseload decreased by 80 percent within months. This requirement was paired with substantial job search assistance and job training opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we should apply the lessons of these success stories to all government welfare programs, particularly food stamps and housing. It is imperative that welfare recipients understand that the government is not offering a one-way handout, but rather, a two-way deal. We are willing to help you, but only if you are willing to help yourself. And with the American economy growing, thanks to tax reform, opportunities are available.

Mr. Speaker, job openings recently hit a record-high of 6.6 million across the country, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. By incorporating education and training, benefit time limits, and strong work requirements, we can move millions of Americans from welfare to work.

In addition to fiscal benefits, engaging in workfare increases self-sufficiency, encourages community engagement, and offers recipients a sense of purpose and dignity.

We have a unique opportunity with this year's farm bill, Mr. Speaker, to enact such reforms, and I encourage my colleagues to not be afraid to seize on this chance and promote work over welfare.

CONGRATULATING ANDY MERFELD

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

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Andy Merfeld, an outstanding educator from my district, for being named Principal of the Year by the Central Minnesota Association of Secondary Principals. The Central Minnesota Association of Secondary Principals consists of over 200 administrators from more than 18 counties. The Principal of the Year is selected for excellence as a collaborative leader, unique curriculum, and personalization. With this