

and development specifically for these new wood-based materials.

□ 1015

We put emphasis on connecting rural America through significant improvements to broadband delivery. We are dedicating funding to rural health projects to help Americans struggling with opioid addictions and other substance abuse disorders.

This is just some of what is included in the conference report. There is much more policy included that provides key wins for producers, rural communities, and American consumers.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this conference report and deliver much-needed certainty to rural America and all Americans who are in need of affordable, high-quality, and safe food.

ABOLISHING BIGOTRY

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, once again, I rise to stand in the well of the House of Representatives. As a proud American, it is always an honor to stand in the well of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak truth to power as well as speak truth about power. The power that I desire to speak truth to is the Speaker of the House, and I want to say something about the Speaker of the House.

Today, I acknowledge the Speaker's righteousness when he made a decision—I am not sure that it is one that he contemplated with any degree of time—but at some point, there was a decision made to allow Articles of Impeachment that I filed to move forward, such that there could at least be a vote to table it or not. He did not interfere with the process. He did not try to change the rules so that there would be no opportunity for a Member to move impeachment forward, to the extent that we did.

I am proud of Speaker RYAN for doing this because, as a result, I hold in my hand what I call the historic 58. Fifty-eight Members of Congress, some of whom were ranking members of full committees, voted to allow this process to move forward. On a second occasion, 66 Members, the historic 66, voted to allow the process to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. RYAN did not try to circumvent the process. For this, I say that I am grateful. I respect him for not trying to circumvent the process. Mr. Speaker, had he tried to circumvent it, I probably would be standing here saying some words that would not be similar in any way to what I am saying currently.

I am mentioning this because there is a question that has been put to me by many members of the press as to whether or not we will move forward again with impeachment. I am here to say without question, reservation, or

hesitation that we should not allow ourselves to get back to bigotry as usual. There seems to be a desire to avoid the question of bigotry emanating from the Presidency. There seems to be a desire to move on to something else; let's find another way to deal with the problem.

But that is not what the people who suffer from the bigotry have to endure, just the conversations. They have to deal with the actual bigotry, the actual ugliness that is being fostered across the length and breadth of this country as a result of the bigotry. There are people who are suffering.

The culture is changing. Bigotry is real, and people have to deal with it. Because they do, I don't think we should allow bigotry to go unnoticed as it emanates from the Presidency. Because I don't think so, I will make an announcement sometime next week, more than likely, as to whether or not we will have additional Articles of Impeachment brought before the House.

I have never interfered with the Mueller investigation; I don't intend to interfere with it. But I just believe that we ought not allow bigotry to go unnoticed. We ought not try to get to a point in this country where we will allow bigotry to be nothing more than a talking point. It ought to be an action item.

The greatest place to ascertain whether it is an action item is how we as Members of Congress not only talk about it, but how we vote when the issue is given an opportunity to be voted upon.

Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I will make an announcement sometime in the near future as to whether or not there will be another vote on bigotry emanating from the Presidency. I also, again, thank you for not circumventing the process. Republicans had a majority, and you could have done it without a single Democratic vote. You respected the right of individual Members. It is the right of the individual that you have protected under your leadership. I pray that protection will continue.

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

HONORING CORY FRITZ

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

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a dedicated public servant and member of my senior staff, Cory Fritz. The Foreign Affairs Committee has benefited greatly from his sound judgment, skill, and passion for the values, including a free press, that have made America strong.

Cory got his start on the Hill writing speeches, advocating stronger U.S. relations with the former captive nations in Europe, for the late Senator Voinovich of Ohio. He later joined the con-

gressional office of then-Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio. Working for John throughout his speakership, Cory played an important role on a number of foreign policy issues, including efforts to force the administration to step up the fight against ISIS.

Upon John's retirement, it was only fitting that Cory move to the Foreign Affairs Committee. As deputy staff director, Cory has elevated the committee's communications operations and played a key role in shaping strategy and policy.

Cory is one of my most trusted advisers. His counsel helped pave the way for a number of important accomplishments, including the landmark Russia, Iran, and North Korea sanctions enacted in 2017.

Also, I am proud to have inspired him to take special interest in conservation policy, which has long been a priority of mine. With Cory's assistance, I have advanced legislation to combat wildlife trafficking and poaching. We have also advanced legislation to preserve southern Africa's vital Okavango River Basin.

As I leave the House, I thank Cory for his 11 years of service to his home State of Ohio, to this Republic, and also to the Congress. I wish him and his wife, Sarah, all the best as they prepare to welcome their first child in the spring.

PROTECT GOOD FRIDAY PEACE ACCORDS

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, one of the dominant news stories on both sides of the Atlantic was the announcement by British Prime Minister Theresa May that she was postponing a much-anticipated vote on accepting a preliminary Brexit package that had been negotiated with the European Union. Her decision, unfortunately, continues the turmoil in her own party and Parliament at large about how to implement a referendum that was narrowly passed instructing her government to leave the European Union that the United Kingdom joined 45 years ago, in 1973.

As a Member of the U.S. Congress that is also divided and struggling with its own ability to execute basic functions, I have a great deal of empathy, as I am sure many of my colleagues do, with the frustration that members of Parliament and the British public are feeling today.

Fundamentally, of course, this is a domestic question for Parliament, and it would be presumptuous for elected officials from the outside to weigh in on the agreement's proposals regarding residency, immigration, visa requirements, and how healthcare coverage will be coordinated if and when the U.K. exits the European Union. However, there is one issue, in which myself and many of my colleagues from

the U.S. have a very keen interest, and I raise it today in a friendly but firm voice. That is, namely, the status of Northern Ireland under the Good Friday peace accords.

Unfortunately, Mrs. May, in her announcement yesterday, indicated that that was the one issue, that her efforts to protect the Good Friday peace accords were going to be renegotiated and possibly dismantled.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the House that the Good Friday peace accords, which were signed 20 years ago last April 10, have the active and supportive involvement of the U.S. Government and the U.S. Congress.

The Clinton administration in the 1990s, at the invitation of the Irish and British Governments, named former U.S. Senator George Mitchell as Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, and he chaired the all-party peace negotiation over a number of years, which led to the Good Friday peace accords. His work, along with his successor, Richard Haass, was crucial to the success of the talks and the execution of the agreement.

In the U.S. Congress, members of a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including our colleague RICHARD NEAL of Springfield, Massachusetts, were frequent visitors and participants during the negotiations.

To this day, Mr. NEAL and bipartisan members of the Friends of Ireland Caucus, of which I am a member, continue to monitor the progress and success of the Good Friday peace accords and are deeply, deeply concerned that Brexit, if it reinstates a hard border on the island of Ireland, will undo one of the great diplomatic successes of our time.

Mr. Speaker, the successful results of the peace agreement cannot be denied. During The Troubles, which preceded the accords, more than 3,600 residents of the six counties of the North lost their lives due to sectarian violence and 763 servicemembers of the British Government and the Northern Irish Government lost their lives. To put that in perspective, 464 U.K. troops have lost their lives in the long war in Afghanistan. The economic results have also been undeniable.

Mr. Speaker, I have a little bit of experience because in 1973 and 1974, I was a student in England and spent the Christmas break in Northern Ireland visiting a fellow student in the town of Enniskillen. I took the train from Dublin to Belfast. In the border town of Dundalk, where I was asleep, I was awoken by a British soldier heavily armed, poking me to look at my backpack.

While we visited in Enniskillen, there was a bombing in the village. Looking around, it was clearly a depressed economy because of the hard borders and because of the isolation of Northern Ireland.

Fast forward, I took a trade mission from the State of Connecticut to Belfast 2 years ago, and it is a transformed city. It is thriving. It is healthy. Clear-

ly, allowing the Northern Irish economy to participate both in the full island as well as Europe has had beneficial effects. That is why the people of Northern Ireland actually voted “no” on Brexit.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a point today where the British Government clearly has to make a decision about whether to preserve one of the great diplomatic successes, which provides a roadmap for sectarian violence all across the world. Diplomacy succeeded in Northern Ireland. It is imperative that those in charge there protect the hard-fought work and remember that there are stakeholders outside of England and Great Britain, including the United States Government and the United States Congress, which have skin in the game and have investment in terms of the great success over the last 20 years.

Protect the Good Friday peace accords. Protect the peace that has flowed from it. Protect the prosperity that has improved the lives of the people of Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, and the world at large.

DEMOCRACY REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCANLON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Speaker-designate PELOSI, Whip HOYER, and Representative SARBANES for honoring the will of the American people and pledging to make democracy reform a top priority for the 116th Congress.

One of the greatest promises of our democracy is that our government is of, by, and for the people. Our democracy has always been a messy experiment. It is not perfect. It is not a spectator sport. But it is our greatest hope. At this point in time, unfortunately, many of our democratic structures are under attack.

In my home, Pennsylvania, over the past decade, we have seen the impact of antidemocratic policies. The cards have been stacked against the voices of Pennsylvanians through unconstitutional gerrymandering, repressive voter ID laws, and restrictive absentee ballot deadlines. These tactics have been used to muzzle the voices of our constituents, as well as voters in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Georgia, and other citizens across the country.

□ 1030

The H.R. 1 package being advanced by Representative SARBANES and the Democracy Reform Task Force is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore the American people's faith in our institutions. History has shown us that our American experiment is at its best when we face complex challenges head-on and we are better for taking them up.

H.R. 1 is our path forward to a more perfect democracy. Our elections are

the bedrock of this Nation, and the sanctity of those elections must be protected from threats, both foreign and domestic.

We can make it easier, not harder, for eligible Americans to vote. We can end the dominance of Big Money in our politics. We can ensure that public officials, from the White House to Members of Congress, put the interests of the American people first. We can do all of those things, and we must.

Public opinion polls show that the American people's distrust of our governmental institutions is at staggering levels. We must work together, Democrats and Republicans, to change course and restore the people's faith. We have real work to do, and Members of the incoming class are ready to roll up our sleeves. The voters have charged us to restore the balance of our political institutions and make sure that everyday Americans have a seat at the table.

When we listen to people instead of special interests, we can raise the minimum wage and create good-paying jobs; we can lower prescription drug prices and give people better access to healthcare; we can make real investments in our infrastructure; we can reduce gun violence; and we can increase funding for job training programs and public education.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to the generations before us who worked to establish this democracy and we owe it to the generations that follow to ensure that we have a Government that is truly by and for the people. We can work on this together. It is up to us to get it done, and this work starts now.

THANKING FIRST RESPONDERS TO THE CRANSTON FIRE

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the communities affected by the Cranston fire, one of the largest wildfires my congressional district and eastern Riverside County has ever seen.

While the Cranston fire was contained in August, many of my constituents are continuing to piece their lives back together, and anytime severe rain is forecasted, they once again go into high alert for mudslides from the burn scar.

The Cranston fire started on July 25, 2018, and within a matter of a few hours residents of Idyllwild and the mountain communities were immediately forced to evacuate from their homes. Without hesitation, first responders from the Idyllwild Fire Department, the Idyllwild Volunteer Fire Company, CAL FIRE, the California Highway Patrol, the U.S. Forest Service, and countless others from all over the Nation sprang into action.

Thanks to their efforts, no lives were lost and the fire was fully contained by August 10, having burned more than