

That is why the Army Corps of Engineers, along with Federal, State, and local agencies, have worked to develop a plan to protect the lives and livelihoods of Staten Islanders by building a seawall.

Federal, State, and local funding for this project already have been secured. All that remains is for Congress to pass my bill to allow for this critical construction to begin. I made a promise when I was sworn in that if something matters to the folks who live in my district—my constituents—well, then it matters to me. That is why I am here today, and that is why I will fight to pass this bill.

I commend my predecessor, Congressman Dan Donovan, who introduced similar legislation in the previous Congress, which passed the House on a bipartisan basis, demonstrating that, when we want to, we can unite in order to enact legislation that saves American lives.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues in Congress to act swiftly on this legislation so that we can allow construction to begin as soon as possible and bring some peace of mind to families worrying about that next storm, worrying that they are going to lose their homes.

In this time when government is shut down, it is damn time that we show the people of Staten Island, of South Brooklyn, of New York City, New York State, and the American people as a whole that government can do something positive.

DO WE HAVE A CRISIS ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER OR NOT?

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, first of all, we all are thinking about those loyal, hardworking Federal employees who are caught in the middle of the challenges that we face here in Washington. As with other battles, these employees will be paid for their time away from the workplace while they are on furlough.

So what is this all about? Do we have a crisis on the southern border or not? I would caution my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to use real numbers.

Are 400,000 illegal immigrants last year across the southern border too few or too many?

Are the 500 homicides by illegal immigrants in Texas over the past decade too few or too many?

Maybe the new Homeland Security Committee could hold a hearing and vet out all of these numbers. There is a problem with that: The committee is not organized yet, so they cannot meet. I would hope that they would, so we could put the facts on the table.

I look at the clips of large groups of illegals trying to rush the border. What has kept them from illegally entering? Well, the fence, the wall, the barrier. A wall system works. Sections of the bor-

der where fencing and walls have been built have seen a decrease in illegal immigration.

San Diego first built its wall in 1992. Illegal traffic dropped 92 percent over the past 23 years.

El Paso built their fence in 1993. Illegal traffic dropped 72 percent in 1 year and 95 percent over 22 years.

Tucson's wall was built in 2000. Illegal traffic dropped 90 percent over 15 years.

The wall in Yuma was built in 2005. Illegal traffic dropped 95 percent over 9 years.

Since walls work, they have historically held bipartisan support. In the fiscal year 2007, the DHS appropriations bill provided more than \$1 billion for fencing along the southwest border. It passed 412-6. Speaker PELOSI, Majority Leader HOYER, Majority Whip CLYBURN, and Homeland Security Chairman THOMPSON were among the "yes" votes.

Former President Barack Obama, in a Senate floor speech from the Secure Fence Act in 2006, said: "It will authorize some badly needed funding for better fences and better security along our borders, and that should help stem some of the tide of illegal immigration in this country."

The Secretary of Homeland Security under Obama, Janet Napolitano, reiterated: "You've got to have a system. You've got to have a system down there that includes boots on the ground, that has to include technology and fencing and infrastructure as part of the overall system."

It is time that we work together to compromise to reopen the government and secure our southern border. We can do this. I believe in this form of government, and I believe in this institution. Let's get to work.

America is an extraordinarily compassionate nation. We welcome immigrants seeking the opportunity to build a better life here, as well as refugees fleeing war, oppression, and poverty around the world. But even as we do this it is only appropriate that it is done legally.

AMERICAN OPTIMISM

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

Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas. Madam Speaker, during one of the most divisive times in American history, I rise today in a moment of American optimism.

In this freshly minted 116th Congress, the most diverse in our history, I welcome all new Members, young and old; Democrats and Republicans; from the North, South, East, or West; male or female; gay or straight; Jew or gentile. And I ask you to join me in this journey of optimism.

Today is the beginning of the rest of our history, the history of the opportunity we have before us to solve the Nation's critical issues that are happening today, the everyday problems that our people live with, in our diverse land.

Let us never forget who we are and the greatness we have shown the world. Let us never forget that this is the America that freed slaves, granted religious freedoms, fed the hungry, and welcomed the stranger; the America that spread democracy and freedom around the globe; the America that freed Europe and defended others from bullies and foes; the America that gave the world electricity and light. We put the first man on the Moon, flew the first woman across the pond, and created the internet and the iPhone and, yes, Facebook and Twitter, too.

We gave the world baseball and proudly root for our Olympians who lead the world in medals. We entertain the world with Hollywood, MTV, and American pop, hip-hop, Tejano, country, rock 'n' roll, and jazz music. We bring smiles and joy to children around the world through Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse.

We are also the country of the Mayo, Johns Hopkins, MD Anderson, and Cleveland clinics.

And all of this is while enjoying the largest economy in the world.

This is the America the world longs to be, and this is the America we have the responsibility to be, the America the world is still patiently and optimistically waiting and watching to see the next great thing we do. We are the America that came together in solidarity after 9/11. We are still that America.

To the young in this country, I promise you, you are going to be okay. There is a lot of reason to be optimistic, because I still believe that everyone serving in this body sincerely loves this country and, at the end of the day, rises to the occasion to do what is right for it.

There is nothing greater than staying united, conserving our creativity and work ethic while respecting our differences. The world is counting on us.

To you, America, I toast. I toast with a freshly brewed double espresso from Starbucks—yes, another American gem. That, my friends, is what makes America great. God bless the USA.

LONGWORTH-GARNER SPIRIT OF BIPARTISANSHIP

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

Mr. HILL of Arkansas. Madam Speaker, first, let me associate myself with the gentleman from Texas and his fine remarks about the strengths of this country and how this country has led the world in every way and is the envy of the world. I thank the gentleman from Texas for his inspirational remarks on this House floor.

Madam Speaker, I look forward, too, with optimism to the 116th Congress. I refuse to be pulled down by the vortex of negativism and profanity that is engulfing social media and cable television programming. Instead, I am