

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOHO. Madam Speaker, I rise in honor of Law Enforcement Appreciation Day to show my support and utmost respect for peace officers across the Nation.

Sadly, last year, we lost over 100 law enforcement officers in the line of duty. Of that number, three came from my hometown. I am reminded today of the continued sacrifice these officers make and the dangers they face day after day and night after night.

It is important that we always show our appreciation for those who work tirelessly to keep us safe. A lesson could be learned from them on service. They serve people, communities, and a nation, not political ideologies.

This selfless service is both physically and mentally demanding on officers and their families. So, today, we honor not only those who serve but those who serve alongside them.

Law enforcement officers deserve our utmost respect and recognition today and every day. Please join me in thanking these brave men and women for their sacrifices and service to our country and our communities.

CONGRATULATING DAN DAVIDSON, ORANGE COUNTY'S FOOTBALL COACH OF THE YEAR

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

Mr. CORREA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Western High School championship-winning football coach Dan Davidson on being named Orange County's Football Coach of the Year. Coach Davidson led the Western High School Pioneers to the first-ever CIF championship.

Coach Davidson built a winning team of hardworking young men—inner city kids, average athletes—and made them believe in themselves and hard work.

Do you know what? They won CIF this year in Orange County.

I want to congratulate Coach Davidson because not only did he create and build a football team of winners, but he also changed the lives of many students in central Orange County.

Coach Davidson, congratulations. All of us in Orange County are proud of you. Keep up the good work.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

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

Mr. GROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the speech the President gave last night. I was disturbed to see that some people, in dealing with the crisis, including a leader on the other side of the aisle, said that some people felt that a wall would be immoral. There are people on late-night talk shows saying we don't have a crisis here.

I am going to point out that 90 percent of the heroin that comes in this country, that kills over tens of thousands of people every year in this country, comes across the border. I don't see how anybody could be so insensitive as to say that is not a crisis and not something we have to deal with at this time.

In the last 10 years in Texas alone, they have arrested over 2,900 people who they believe commit homicide who have come across the border. How in the world is it not a crisis when 2,900 people—that is almost as many people who died in the Twin Towers—are killed by people who are in this country illegally? It is completely undermining our immigration law.

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT DAY

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight in recognition of National Law Enforcement Day.

Our officers who hit the streets on behalf of our safety, we need to show them appreciation, and I do. We also need to give them better tools and better laws that make their job easier, because it is, indeed, at the end of the day, us who they are protecting.

We have things happen in California, like we saw with the tragedy, due to lack of control of our borders, with Officer Singh, who unfortunately had to give his life unnecessarily. These tragedies need to end.

On this day, as we recognize them, the thin blue line between us as citizens and the harm that could be brought to us is greatly appreciated.

For those who are always out there and every day get up, kiss their families good-bye, and, hopefully, return home at the end of that day safe as they have kept us safe, we honor them. We ask for God's blessings for safety and to return home each day intact as they keep our communities intact.

We need to do a better job of honoring them by giving them the tools, the laws, and the secure borders that would help them accomplish that.

SHUTDOWN AFFECTING FEDERAL WORKERS

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today for our veterans and government employees out of work due to the Trump shutdown. On day one, House Democrats took steps to restore certainty to people's lives by passing a complete funding package to reopen the government.

Now we are preparing further action to reopen government, so that we can meet the needs of the American people, protect our borders, and respect our workers.

In fact, one of my constituents who works for the IRS and specializes in helping hurricane victims told me that he and his wife, who is also a Federal employee, both are affected by the shutdown, and they cannot pay this month's mortgage and their other bills.

Madam Speaker, he worked 12 hours a day in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. He was there for the people of Georgia. It is past time we reopen the government and be there for our Federal workers.

□ 1730

YEAR-END REPORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. STEVENS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Madam Speaker, there is a twofold goal being sought by many of us right now, and it is this: to keep the government fully open and to secure our border.

No one wins in a government shutdown. No one wins if the border is not safe. We ought to be able to rise above the momentary difficulty, whether it is a negotiation between the Senate and the House, the President and the House, the President and the Senate, and get to those mutually compatible goals of fully funding an operational government, as well as ensuring that Americans are safe and that we have the right type of assistance to our border personnel, the right type of barriers, the right type of technology, the right type of preventative measures to protect us all, and create the conditions in which America can have a truly just and humanitarian response to those in need. That is what is at issue this moment.

With that said, Madam Speaker, though, I think it is important that, as we are at the beginning of a new Congress, as we were all sworn in last week, as this Chamber was filled with Members' children and Members' families coming from such extraordinarily diverse backgrounds, it was a celebratory atmosphere. It always tends to be that way, and then we get into the hard, hard work of governing.

As President Kennedy once said, to govern is to choose wisely, and in a society divided by deep cultural and philosophical difficulties, that actually manifests itself here in the people's House.

It is incumbent upon those of us who have been given this awesome responsibility to govern to undertake the awesome responsibility of deciding to govern well, to carry forth that spirit of the swearing in day with our families here, and that oath of office, where there is a common narrative around who we are as a people and where we should go as a Nation, reaching back to our most honored-in-time traditions and projecting them forward so America can have confidence that we have

set up the guardrails for a successful culture, a successful economy, a successful society.

That is our job. It is going to take difficult moments of prudential wrestling. It is my hope it will be done in a civil manner and that people will make their firm case and fight for those principles, but do so with an eye toward building consensus.

We in Nebraska, I believe, invented the phrase “get ‘er done.” Just get ‘er done. Fight for what you believe and seek that which is possible. They are not mutually incompatible goals. That is our responsibility as legislators for the good, the well-being of the entire American public.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I would like to do something a little bit unique. I would actually like to look back for a moment at the year in review and some important things that were accomplished.

We tend to be caught in what I call the tyranny of the urgent, where what is right in front of us completely occupies us. Of course, we have a 24/7, 911 media that heightens all of this intensity. It is what it is. But the reality is, we did some pretty good things last year, last term, and I want to review a few of them.

In December, the House and Senate passed a new farm bill with very strong bipartisan support. For a lot of Americans, it is very easy to overlook this accomplishment. Our grocery bills are some of the lowest in the world, our food is readily available, and our safety net for those who are vulnerable is well considered.

It comes down to this: it is the vastness of our land and the quality of our soil and the gritty ingenuity of our farmers and ranchers who lay the foundation for America’s prosperity, stability, and economic vitality. We tend to forget this because our food comes somewhat easy to us.

The farm bill provides risk management tools to maximize this natural gift, allowing farmers and ranchers to provide food security for our country, our nutrition programs, as well as food assistance to millions of others around the world and protect those who are in very vulnerable circumstances.

This bill also fosters conservation practices that enhance the protection of our soil and our wildlife habitat. I am pleased by the increase in the number of acres in the Conservation Reserve Program.

The farm bill ensures that America continues to lead the world in agricultural innovation, food safety, and renewable fuels. In Nebraska, agriculture is central to our well-being, our way of life, and our culture. Our land-grant universities help ensure that we maintain our tremendous productivity.

The farm bill is a once-in-every-5-year piece of legislation. The birth of such legislation is neither smooth nor easy, but we got it done. It is a good lesson for what we are facing now with new challenges ahead of us. We got it done in a very strong, bipartisan vote.

For Nebraskans, and many people throughout rural America, the farm bill is not just another Washington accomplishment. Like the rhythms of planting and harvesting, it is an expected rite of legislative passage essential to who we are as a people, as Americans, and to our well-being.

One of the things that I am excited about, Madam Speaker, is that beginning farmers and local food producers are big winners in our farm bill. I am very encouraged by the growing interest of young people in seeking agricultural opportunity.

We are witnessing a food culture awakening, with local chefs, farmers markets, and a keen interest in eating local. The farm bill helps these next generation farmers and food entrepreneurs through new resources and training, such as the Local Agriculture Market Program, called LAMP, which accelerates the farm-to-fork movement across America, connecting local farmers with families, consumers, and restaurants. This offers a big, big opportunity for us all.

I am also happy, Madam Speaker, that the farm bill includes my provisions to enhance the Farmer-to-Farmer Program. For over 30 years, the Farmer-to-Farmer Program has connected volunteer American farmers, agriculture extension experts, and others with deep knowledge of the agriculture industry with the world’s farmers abroad. From dairy production to seed selection to entomology, irrigation, and crop yield determination improvement, as well as farm credit, this sharing of America’s agricultural expertise dramatically enhances the capacity of people elsewhere to grow their own food, contributing to worldwide food security, community well-being, and human flourishing. Food security is the key.

This year, we also passed the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act. I had worked on this important piece of legislation when it first passed. It amends the Global Security Act of 2016 to enable programs that support sustainable agriculture around the world and it extends assistance for international disaster relief and rehabilitation, especially for emergency food programs.

Switching topics a bit, Madam Speaker, the fundamental duty that we all have here is to keep America safe. This requires a modern and properly equipped military.

In recent years, our force structure has significantly deteriorated. Planes could not fly in certain circumstances and other equipment was not available.

This past year in Congress, we passed the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act and the defense appropriations bill. Again, most of the government is open and functioning. We are working toward the rest. This helps rebuild our military after years of budget cuts. Our Active Duty, National Guard, and reserve force personnel will receive a 2.6 percent pay raise, the largest in 9

years. We are going to purchase new aircraft, tanks, ships, and other military hardware to replace and upgrade worn out equipment. These bills also increase across-the-board funding for additional personnel, training, maintenance, and operations to ensure that our military is always ready to defend our Nation.

Madam Speaker, while a strong military is vital, America’s safety and prosperity also depends upon a skillful mix of diplomacy and development. Building authentic relationships around the world and attacking the root causes of structural poverty are equally important goals that need to work in tandem with a properly sized and prepared military.

A race toward technological superiority through ever-larger weapons systems will not unilaterally resolve our most difficult security challenges. The tech gap that we enjoy is closing, and will continue to close rapidly.

Then, we have to ask ourselves: Then what?

I often use the phrase “foreign policy realism” to guide how I believe the United States should engage in global affairs. It is this: strong defense, smart diplomacy, and sustainable development. These are the three pillars.

Thanks to the dedication and courage of our troops and our diplomats and the exhaustive work of many others who serve from their heart in far-away places, we ought to be very grateful that our country has been kept safe from attack. There is always a however. However, real risks remain.

Northern Iraq and Syria are places where ISIS and other dark forces could regenerate. Iran meddles and frustrates peace throughout the region. The United States’ relationship with Saudi Arabia is under severe scrutiny in light of our intelligence findings that implicated the Saudi Crown Prince in the murder of an American-based Saudi journalist. We also face risks from various actors to increasingly powerful, yet more nimble and mobile nuclear capabilities.

Madam Speaker, I lead the Nuclear Security Working Group in Congress. We had a very important dialogue with the administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration as we closed out the last Congress to discuss our coordination of nuclear non-proliferation activities.

There are two core elements in preventing an attack. The first, of course, is deterrence. The second is threat reduction. Again, the dual work of our military and other government efforts in nuclear threat reduction has been successful in preventing nuclear and radiological terrorism.

The challenge is to constantly reassess the changing threat environment. A single failure can lead to catastrophic consequences. These efforts must be matched with an equal effort to halt and reverse nuclear proliferation throughout the world.

In a September conference, we gathered with national and nuclear security

experts and former government officials across four administrations with the singular goal to improve U.S. Government oversight and coordination of nuclear counter and nonproliferation efforts. As a result, I am going to propose the creation of a nuclear nonproliferation council to enable a unified U.S. Government strategy on nuclear nonproliferation.

In the National Defense Authorization Act, which we passed, there is a section also that perhaps has been overlooked, but it is important. It will speed the elimination of cesium chloride that can be used to make dirty bombs. This policy change that we were pleased to work on reduces the risk of a catastrophic radiological attack inside our borders.

In the face of expanding Russian and Chinese nuclear arsenals, our defense bill modernizes our nuclear deterrence capability even as we hope to reestablish a more stable and peaceful world. Only through a combination of strength and an openness to dialogue can we avert a nuclear arms race.

□ 1745

Back in June, the first-ever meeting between leaders of the United States and North Korea took place. President Trump met face to face with Kim Jong-un in a preliminary step towards reconciliation and denuclearization.

The summit that was held in Singapore was a first step to shift an escalating trajectory of missile launches and hostile rhetoric, reducing anxiety for the region, America, and the world.

The summit took a new approach to a long standoff. For the first time, a U.S. President reached out directly to a North Korean leader. The meeting would not have happened, though—and this is very important, Madam Speaker—without a unified global community willing to support the preconditions needed to encourage Kim Jong-un to meet.

As an initial gesture of goodwill, North Korea returned the remains of U.S. service personnel and destroyed at least one nuclear testing facility.

Clearly, much more progress is needed, and a joint action plan will require North Korea to continue to earnestly engage in nonproliferation.

I believe that congressional leadership should play a role here in policy developments that can help the administration reduce the nuclear threats on the Korean Peninsula.

Now, Madam Speaker, where I live, Nebraska, plays a critical role in keeping America safe. Offutt Air Force Base and Strategic Command are essential to America's security, and the steady work of guiding budgets and building the necessary coalitions here in Congress resulted in dramatic improvements to both Strategic Command as well as Offutt.

The new USSTRATCOM headquarters building is nearing completion. Its increased capability, beginning this summer, will add to the com-

batant command's charge as one of the Nation's most vital missions, and that is nuclear deterrence.

A major repair of Offutt Air Force Base's runway will soon begin.

Again, I am very pleased, working with the Nebraska delegation and our colleagues, to continue to advance the completion of the Strategic Command as well as the enhancement of Offutt Air Force Base.

Offutt is home to the Air Force's 55th Wing. The wing conducts intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions. This is very important, Madam Speaker, because, again, it is something that is overlooked in our tense times.

One of the 55th Wing's important aircraft is the OC-135B. It flies in support of the 34-international-member Treaty on Open Skies, one of the last remaining functional arms control regimes that is operational between the United States and the Russian Federation.

I am pleased that, working together, we were able to enhance funding for the OC-135B aircraft, again, vital to one of the last linkages of agreements with the Russians.

Madam Speaker, I want to turn to another topic that really ought to be at the forefront of our discussions, but rarely is; if we are going to create a 21st century architecture for international stability, I believe it revolves around two words: human dignity.

We traditionally think of diplomacy as between nation-states. Increasingly in our interconnected world, where people can reach people in faraway places in an instant or by travel in a very short period of time, it is this deeper transcendent idea that is still operational in our culture. It underlies our founding here in America. It is in our earliest documents. It is alluded to. This idea of human dignity, this sacred space of personhood from which the free exercise of conscience and right reason and other rights that we tend to take for granted, such as religious freedom, flow.

Human dignity, the two words that mark the 21st century architecture for how we ought to conduct international affairs, reaching toward authentic relationships and dialogue with people with whom we may have had tremendous misunderstandings in the past, tremendous tensions, or even the grave consequences of war.

Again, as I mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, the tech gap is closing. We can beat anybody anywhere. We can do that and will continue to be able to do that. And, again, a strong military is absolutely essential to keeping the peace and creating the conditions for stability internationally, which protects us here at home.

But what happens when, again, the miniaturization of technology is such that any bad actor or any bad nation has ready access to it; we have to ask ourselves: And then what?

It is this idea of being in authentic dialogue around this fundamental prin-

ciple that is operative in the way in which we conduct our affairs; human dignity, mutual respect for that sacred space of the person and their perspectives and their ability to use reason to think for what is good for themselves, their family, and their country.

Human dignity. This is manifesting itself very clearly in something that, again, is really overlooked in our dialogue because we are caught in the urgency of the moment.

Let me point this out, Madam Speaker. It is about the country of Iraq. America has given so much. We have lost so much in Iraq that it is hard to understand why engagement is ongoing and necessary. The thought of it is exhausting to the American people. It is exhausting to our process.

But I need to point this out. Much is at stake. Iraq once had a mosaic and an ancient tapestry of religious pluralism that existed there. Christians used to total 1.5 million; now only a few hundred thousand remain.

The Yazidi community, another ancient faith tradition that lived in peace, in persecution off and on; but, in attempting to live out their faith tradition in northern Iraq, right now there are about 400,000 people from the Yazidi faith tradition trapped in refugee camps. They are internally displaced persons living in tent structures, distant from their northern Iraq homes, and many are children.

As of this past summer, we had a statistic—and it is hard to know where this is now, given the dynamics—that about 3,500 Yazidi women remained as slaves of ISIS.

In fact, Madam Speaker, we are still working through the logistics, but I am very proud that I reached out to Nadia Murad, who is a Nobel Peace Prize winner, who was captured by someone named Salman, the Iraqi, and held in slavery.

She came to my office, and I spoke with her and I said: I would like to hear the fullness of your story, but I recognize that is selfish on my part and that the horror and the pain and the tragedy are very real to you. So if you do not wish to say anything, I completely understand, but I would like to know more if you are willing.

And she agreed. And she told us, moment by moment about what happened to her family, about how she was captured, sold, and how she eventually escaped, with the help of a Muslim family, by the way.

I reached out to Nadia recently, and I invited her to the State of the Union. And she is going to come. We are working through it, and I am hopeful that works out. Right now she is scheduled to come, and I am proud of that.

Because it is not about me giving a speech here about human dignity—and I think Nadia would agree with me saying this—it is not even about the trauma that she went through and the need to heal. The reason that she is speaking so clearly and so courageously about the horror she went through, in

the midst of her great pain, is this singular concept right here: human dignity.

How can civilizations survive if we do not somehow rally ourselves around this fundamental principle of respecting the sacred space of personhood, of allowing people the liberty to live in peace and exercise their tradition as they see fit, to do good things for their family, to carry forward the wisdom of their tradition and ages, through their family life and the exercise of their faith.

If we give up on that principle, where do we go?

We can fight it out. We might even be able to win. But the deeper answer lies in the message that Nadia and so many others are telling us, crying out for justice and humanitarian relief and begging for a new way to think, a new way to order ourselves.

And because we have the philosophical foundation here in America, because we have been a just and generous society and we have welcomed people who have fled persecution, the world looks at us as this beautiful place of the residual, of the protection of that fundamental value that I believe every heart longs for: to be respected, to be in community, to be loved.

Now, here is what I think we ought to do. We have about 5,400 American troops in Iraq. And, with the help of international partners, we have been training Iraqi national forces and nurturing their capacity to lead and finish the work of defeating the dark, twisted horror of ISIS.

At the behest of the Vice President, I went to Iraq last summer, and the Iraqi forces that we have trained and the military told me directly they have fought and they have fought well. Again, the irony of the attack of ISIS and the genocide against Christians and Yazidis and other religious minorities and the killing of so many innocent Muslim people is that it has created a nationalism, if you will, among the Iraqi people. And they have fought hard and fought well and taken many, many casualties.

But here is the key: An additional security footprint is still required in the Nineveh Plain and Sinjar so that it is possible—these are the areas in northern Iraq proximate to Kurdistan. A new security settlement in that area would allow the return of Christians and allow the return of Yazidis to their traditional homes and to begin to rebuild.

Again, as I mentioned, in July, at the request of the Vice President, I joined Administrator Mark Green of the United States Agency for International Development and Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, former Governor of Kansas, and we went to Iraq together.

We were responding to reports that our initial efforts to help the religious minority communities were not having the intended effect.

When we stepped into the dusty alleyways and streets and villages and

campes, we gained firsthand knowledge of the broken conditions there. Our trip included intense discussions with Iraqi religious leaders, international aid workers, displaced children, U.N. personnel, as well as our military leadership.

Despite the situation's fragility, there is certain progress being made, including courageous acts of ecumenical alliance and revitalization, often with international nongovernmental organizations and faith-based entities.

My firsthand observation was this: The situation in Iraq can be summarized in three words: possibility, urgency, and security.

Multiple levels of challenge remain. Security is weak, and the prospect of permanent refugee camps is real.

If Iraq loses its minority communities, the hope for a healthy pluralism in the region will die, and a severe chain of events will occur. Iran will expand its presence. ISIS could regenerate. Out-migration will ensue, and Iraq will forever lose this extraordinary ancient tapestry of multiple faith traditions that are so vital for human dignity, mutual respect, and peace.

So, working with the administration, our government, we are expanding and accelerating our humanitarian support for those who suffered genocide, and this is all good. However, the financial assistance must be combined with the proper security settlement that ensures a just return for these beleaguered minorities to the Nineveh Plain and Sinjar.

So, Madam Speaker, this is what I have done. I am recently getting ready to reintroduce a resolution in the House of Representatives to develop a multinational security mission to integrate local Christians, Yazidis, and other minorities into the security forces of the central government of Iraq.

□ 1800

Getting this right means justice for the oppressed, stability for Iraq, and the preservations of the principles necessary for civilization itself. By doing so, we will correct a fragile security situation. The religious minorities will have special autonomy for protection of their own areas, but, again, under Central Iraqi authority, under the Iraqi flag. The mission will be international in character under the Iraqi flag. I know, right now, many other nations are very willing to join this effort, to put down a new security footprint that would stabilize permanently that area and allow people to go home.

Madam Speaker, there is another issue related critically to human dignity, and while it is not something that we often talk and think about, we are starting to get our mind around how big tech is controlling our lives. We are starting to worry that the surveillance of our habits and our contacts by people who shouldn't be surveilling us, these big tech compa-

nies, are creating multiple levels of difficulty. This growing problem here in America is affecting the most vulnerable persons here: our children.

The CEO of Google, a few months ago, recently came before Congress, and he did receive an earful. Big tech is controlling our lives. Big tech is concentrated and dominating. Big tech is going to necessarily come under increased policy scrutiny to ensure that individual privacy is protected and competition is not stifled. But one overlooked area, problem, is protecting children online.

Now, Google's YouTube is the most popular online platform for children on Earth, and 8 out of 10 U.S. children from 6 to 12 use it daily. In April of this past year, 23 child and privacy advocacy groups filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission arguing that Google's YouTube online video and advertising network systematically collected data on the online habits of tens of millions of YouTube-watching children under the age of 13, and that data was sold to marketers.

Now, in support of this advocacy, Congressman DAVID CICILLINE, who is from Rhode Island, who sits on the other side of the aisle from me, he and I asked Google for answers on its policy regarding protection of children online. The response was weak.

So our goal is to continue to try to ensure that the internet's extraordinarily beneficial technological advances square with the time-honored values essential to a humane, decent, and dignified world. We want Google to thoroughly answer our questions. We want Google to be true to its original motto: "Don't Be Evil."

Now, Madam Speaker, let me turn to another topic, and touch on it briefly, to talk about what is germane in this moment, given the discussions of border security, some of the things we actually worked on last year that weren't successful but, nonetheless, may provide some answers for the current dilemma that we find ourselves in.

America is, again, a kind and generous nation, and we have opened our arms to persons who seek refuge and want to rebuild their own lives and accept and embrace the deeper values of our country. However, charity cannot flow from chaos. No one is entitled to enter America illegally. Law and order create the conditions for justice and compassion. Law and order create the conditions necessary for charity, for justice, and for compassion.

Now, the dynamics around immigration are complex and multilayered. A Yale study came out last year that said the number of persons illegally in the United States could be as high as 30 million, but at least 40 percent of those have overstayed a visa. And over the past 30 years—and this is what we are wrestling with right now—over the past 30 years, incomplete border control, insufficient Federal enforcement, and the cynical exploitation of the poor for economic gain here in America

has created an attractiveness and led to a failing system.

So, in an attempt to meet multiple immigration challenges, to align the various perspectives that are here in Congress about a humane and compassionate response about the need for additional, necessary border resources, about the need to update our immigration laws, this year we voted on legislation that would stiffen internal enforcement, modernize our immigration laws, and significantly increase border resources.

The House-led legislation moved more toward a merit-based immigration system, provided new funding for more humane shelters at the border. It accelerated the judicial review process, and it made accommodations to resolve the anxious ambiguity for those who are called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA kids, children who were brought here through no fault of their own.

I supported these initiatives, but, unfortunately, they failed in the House. And moving forward, I think we need to keep certain other priorities at the forefront of the immigration debate, which are, of course, an increase in border security, robust internal enforcement, and this additional priority which is now only coming to light. We have been doing this for a number of years. Of course, the policy needs to be revisited and evaluated in terms of success, but I do think it is an important one: moving the immigration debate off the 1-yard line and working with creative and imaginative foreign policy engagement with the countries in the Northern Triangle of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. In that way, to help those countries build more just and humane systems both economically and politically, to create the conditions for stability, decreases the intensity of need for out-migration for either economic purposes or fleeing criminal activity.

Now, immigration can seem remote and abstract for many of us, but it is important to remember that it has a human face, and I am very proud that we are doing two things at once here. We are, of course, debating the importance of immigration policy and potential changes, but also assisting many people who have gotten tangled in immigration difficulties back home.

Madam Speaker, I think there are certain things in this House that transcend disagreement, and one of them is our veterans. Americans often sense what is right and good, and we instinctively recognize the nobility of self-sacrifice for another, for our country, and for our timeless ideals, and our veterans stand above the division and discord—beyond politics—to what is lasting and true.

But beyond our applause and admiration, we are also duty-bound in this body to keep our promise to care for them. So, this past year, we did some important things.

Back at home, we are in the process, after some long negotiations, of cre-

ating a new state-of-the-art VA facility in Lincoln, on the historic veterans' campus there. This is a victory. This is a significant victory for economic regeneration of a unique historic property, and it arrives on the heels of a very successful public-private partnership to expand and improve and innovate the Omaha VA Medical Center. I am so proud that Nebraska continues to inspire the Nation with creative partnerships to assist our veterans.

Now, here in Congress, we passed a law called the VA Maintaining Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks, the acronym is the MISSION Act. It was signed into law, and it brought the long-needed reforms in the last Congress to the VA system. It provides a replacement for the VA Choice program and consolidates community care programs for veterans who live far from a VA center or experience long wait times for care.

This is going to assist many of our veterans in rural communities and help them receive the quality of care that they deserve in a reasonable amount of time. This act also expanded the veteran caregiver program, making more pre-9/11 veterans and their families eligible for assistance.

Now, another bipartisan project that I hope we can pursue shortly, and we have been in dialogue in a bipartisan manner on this, is to work with the international community to create a historic center at the site of our D-day battles in Normandy. A new institute that is being envisioned by some European colleagues could reestablish, for the 21st century, a renewed understanding of the pivotal battle that happened on D-day, its consequences for the war, and the institutions that emerged afterward that have created the conditions for stability and prosperity, many of which are aging and need to be updated and challenged.

The United States cannot pull the world's weight alone. We need to be in authentic partnership and in authentic dialogue when we have differences, but in partnership with those who have been given the capacity by our sacrifice, both militarily and economically, to advance their own economies and build out systems of governance.

Again, the 21st century architecture of international diplomacy is going to revolve around that central idea: authentic partnerships based on the philosophical principle of human dignity that lead to burden sharing and vision sharing at the same time.

Madam Speaker, I had an interesting thing happen this summer. I wasn't at home, and I regret that I wasn't there to receive him, but he stopped in my office. World War II veteran Sidney Walton stopped by, and he has a really fascinating story.

You see, he told my staff and some of the young people there, the interns, he has a deep regret that when he was young, he never really took the time to visit with the last few remaining Civil War veterans. So he has taken it upon

himself; he has embarked on a national No Regrets Tour, and his goal is to visit all 50 States and give young Americans a chance to meet a World War II veteran.

Again, his name is Sidney Walton. We were honored to have him in Nebraska, and he will finish his tour at the White House, as I understand it, this February, on his 100th birthday.

Thank you, Sidney. Great, great effort.

Madam Speaker, let me also touch upon another area that is so essential to our well-being, our sense of being able to fulfill these deepest longings that we have, our healthy sense of ambition for ourselves and for our family.

A lot of times around here we cite economic data, have a bunch of charts that show statistics. We do a lot of that around here. It doesn't really convey, I think, the deeper dynamics of what is happening. But let me go into it just for a bit and talk about the positive outcomes that have occurred.

This year, we have seen more jobs, increased wages, and reinvestment in equipment, plants, and research and development. Our gross domestic product, one of the measures of the economy, is climbing, and median household income is rising. Unemployment is at a 50-year low, and many people who have been marginalized or on the sidelines, thankfully, have found access to meaningful work.

And if we think about a holistic approach to helping our neighbor, work is dignity. When a person is able to use their gifts and talents, either their two hands or their intellect, to make things, they are not only providing for their own well-being, but they are in solidarity with the community. This benefit of exchange goes beyond just material. It creates the value of relationships. That is the beauty and dignity of work.

And when people are sidelined, when entire communities have been decimated through poor planning or poor policies or become overdependent upon one industry that decides it is going to pick up and leave—and we have seen that happen over and over in America—it is not fair to people; it is not fair to communities.

But when we can see a return of entrepreneurial momentum, especially in small business—and again, people who have had real difficulty, for whatever reason, finding access to meaningful work restores individuals' vitality, of course, helps them to help themselves and creates solidarity and community. That is what, when we go into all these charts and graphs and economic figures, we really ought to be talking about, what I just said: the dignity and beauty and meaning of work, the gift of work, the ability to create the conditions necessary for societal flourishing.

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So last year, we passed an important, what was called Tax Cuts and Jobs Act,

and we are seeing this enhanced economic growth and more take-home pay for families.

In addition to those important benefits, there is another little-known provision in here that I want to touch on for a moment, and it is called Opportunity Zones. It provides powerful tax incentives to encourage revitalization of some of the newest, most economically distressed areas of the country. It has been overlooked in terms of our understanding of that law.

This investment opportunity will foster job regeneration and make better use of taxpayer dollars already spent, and it forges stronger communities.

Madam Speaker, I used to be on our city council back home, and most of city council works is public works. When you see an area that is no longer functioning well, it is not just a blight on the community; it is not just that buildings are run down. We already made an investment there. We already paid for streets. We already paid for streetlights. We already paid for utilities, and they are being underutilized. That minimizes the return on an investment already made.

We also have to provide police and fire protection for these areas. Again, those are real costs to the taxpayer. They are not on an accounting balance sheet, but they are real costs. It is called opportunity cost and underutilized investment. It is already there.

So this idea of regenerating places across America that have the infrastructure already creates the conditions in which we get a better return on the tax dollar for money already spent. We are not chewing up additional land and resources. We are recycling, regenerating, rethinking possibility in some of the hardest hit areas of our country.

I am excited. In my own congressional district, there are 14 of these Opportunity Zones that have been designated.

Now, here are some hard realities, and I should point them out because they are real. Let's just be honest.

Our deficit is high, and it is stubbornly high, and there are real disparities between those at the top and those who struggle to make a living.

And while we hear policymakers tend to take too much credit for economic booms and too little blame for the crashes, most analysts do conclude that the actions taken by Congress over the last year have improved our economic outlook—again, a good accomplishment.

We got the farm bill done. We got the right type of tax reform done. We strengthened our military, and we are looking forward to the debates around where we go as a nation now.

Something that continues to be difficult for all of us, though, is the right type of healthcare reform. And I am going to venture out here and say that I would assume that everybody in this body holds to these same three principles. I don't mean to speak for any-

one else, but this is what I believe. I think we ought to be striving for three things in the right type of healthcare reform: lower cost, improved well-being, and the protection of vulnerable persons.

So let's just start there. Let's not create another proxy fight over the Affordable Care Act. Let's just start there.

How do we get to lower cost, particularly for people in rural communities who are priced out of the individual market and have incomes that they don't get a subsidy?

Some of the farmers in my community are paying as high as \$40,000 for healthcare. You can't do it unless you are very wealthy.

So what happens? A member of the family has to leave and go get a job in order to get the benefit. We don't even know how to calculate the economic lost potential of forcing somebody to go do a job they don't want to do simply to get health insurance. We don't even know how to calculate that.

So I proposed something in the farm bill. Unfortunately, the Senate didn't take it up, but it is the Rural Health Insurance Act, which would have subsidized the startup of new risk pools to provide for better health insurance options in areas of rural communities, primarily, where this market has been decimated, where people have had to change the way they reorder their economic lives in order to have some access to health insurance. I thought it was a good idea.

The startup costs for risk pool sharing, the sharing burden that is necessary to create an insurance product for smaller businesses, are high, so I wanted to provide, just like we do in markets that don't function efficiently, like crop insurance, a subsidy that would help the startup of these new risk pools in order to give more competition to the health insurance market in rural communities. That is one idea I had. We didn't get it all the way through, but I am glad it passed the House.

I look forward to working with colleagues on the other side of the aisle again who are looking toward those three goals. How do we think creatively and imaginatively about reducing costs, improving well-being?

We are right around the corner from amazing breakthroughs in innovation and technology in both managing and preventing and curing disease, and we have significantly increased our funding on a bipartisan basis for the National Institutes of Health for disease research.

So we have done a number of things that are important for the American people. Of course, it tends to get overshadowed by some of the more philosophical fights that have occurred, but I would ask my colleagues, let's embrace the concept that we might be able to find some policies that everybody could potentially agree on around three goals: reducing cost, improving

well-being, and protecting vulnerable persons. I think that is pretty reasonable.

There is another idea out there that I will be introducing this year. I already have a cosponsor from the other side of the aisle. Here is the problem:

For 3 years in a row now, America's life expectancy has declined. We are consuming more healthcare and dying younger. Rates of asthma and diabetes have skyrocketed in some populations, and it is really hard to see whether or not we are making progress on certain preventable illnesses. We can do better than that. That is not a necessary condition that we have to settle on.

So, to start an effective new conversation, I am introducing the Community Health Improvement Leadership and Development Act. It is called the CHILD Act. My cosponsor is from a large urban area, and this allows communities across America to fully participate in improving their own health.

How does it work? When community members find an innovative way to improve health and save money in their State Medicaid program, the legislation allows the verified savings to be shared back to that very community and State. It is a virtual cycle of assuring access to care and more creative prevention. I like it. It is a win-win for taxpayers and people in communities and towns across Nebraska and America.

As we go on, I hope this is one of those ideas that fits into the three sets of principles as to how we are going to reduce cost, improve outcomes, and protect vulnerable persons.

Madam Speaker, I know our time is getting ready to run short, and can you give me an idea of how much time is left.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Nebraska has 7 minutes remaining.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Madam Speaker, I want to introduce a new topic in the time that we have remaining, again speaking to that which might be able to unite us in a very divided time, that which is a fundamental principle that is operative in most of our hearts, that which, again, transcends these temporary and urgent moments of policy division. It is what I call natural security.

We talked about national security. We talked about economic security. We talked about human dignity, family security. Now I want to talk about natural security, and here is an example.

Nebraska is one of the only States where you can find three distinct subspecies of the turkey.

Madam Speaker, are you with me on this? It is really very fascinating.

In the southeast corner of Nebraska, you can find the Eastern turkey. In the southwest corner, you can see a Rio, and out west, you can find a Merriam. This unique trifecta exists right there in my home.

Now, why am I raising this? Why would you be raising this? Of course, I

find it interesting, and I hope you do as well, Madam Speaker.

This newfound abundance of turkeys is an amazing story because, due to urban pressures and habitat loss and improperly regulated hunting, not too long ago, wild turkeys were in decline across the Nation. But they have since rebounded through basic conservation efforts.

With innovative thinking and proactive policy, we can conserve and restore other wildlife and natural habitats, while bringing social, cultural, and economic multipliers to our rural communities.

Nebraska has been at the forefront of such conservation efforts, and we will continue to lead this charge at home as well as here, so I have introduced the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

Now, Madam Speaker, we weren't able to get it through Congress last year, but I think by the end of the session, we had 120—it was probably a little bit higher—bipartisan cosponsors.

So what does it do? It takes an upstream approach to habitat protection through robust funding of State wildlife action plans so that we don't have the downstream effect of habitat loss. In Nebraska, we do this through means of voluntary landowner agreements.

This is why this is important. As we approach the renewal of the Endangered Species Act, RAWA, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, actually gets in front of the problem by preventing wildlife from becoming endangered in the first place, and it moves us from costly regulation and litigation to collaboration.

I am very excited about this because I think it is another way in which we can use moneys from lands in Federal trust and plow it back into another form of trust that creates a widespread benefit for those interested in environmental policy, those interested in conservation policy, and those interested in enhanced recreational sporting and hunting opportunity.

That is why so many people have gotten on this bill. It transcends our divide. It is a creative mechanism by which we use certain moneys that are already being gathered into the Treasury and apply them in innovative and creative ways.

Madam Speaker, I, again, am grateful for the opportunity to have had time to present to this body an overview of last year's work. It is important because, ultimately, it is not just about policy; it is about persons.

A woman named Mary came into my office this past year, and she was with two men who had made their living as truckers. Their pensions were in danger. Mary just began to tear up as she explained the dire circumstances in which they found themselves, because multiemployer pension plans—this is a little bit in the weeds, but multiemployer pension plans, some are in dire condition.

So what does that mean? Somebody who said, "I am going to work for this

set of benefits and, in turn, I am going to be guaranteed an income of this level in my older years," all of that promise, all that work and those promises are now under real threat.

So, again, working in a bipartisan fashion, that is an area which is in severe need that we worked to try to fix last year and will do so again, working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Madam Speaker, my intention tonight was to give an overview of the last year because so often, again, in the dynamics of the moment, we lose sight of the good things that were accomplished for our economic security, for our national security, for family security, for the well-being of our land and water. By taking a little bit of a look back, maybe this gives us some prospect for unity, consensus, while fighting on principle, but unity and consensus for good.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 29 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, January 10, 2019, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

17. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-518, "Bruce Robey Court Designation Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

18. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-533, "Clarification of Hospital Closure Procedure Temporary Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

19. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-546, "Revised Transfer of Jurisdiction over U.S. Reservation 724 (Lots 896 and 897 within Square 620) and Extinguishment of Covenants Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

20. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-532, "Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Temporary Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

21. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-519, "Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Support Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

22. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C.

Act 22-545, "Relocation of a Passageway Easement in Square 696 Authorization Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

23. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-544, "Approval of the Starpower Communications Open Video System Franchise Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

24. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-503, "Revised Synthetics Abatement and Full Enforcement Drug Control Temporary Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

25. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-542, "Parcel 42 Surplus Property Declaration and Disposition Approval Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

26. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-541, "Boxing and Wrestling Commission Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

27. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-502, "Parent-led Play Cooperative Temporary Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

28. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-540, "Vulnerable Population and Employer Protection Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

29. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-547, "Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Support Clarification Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

30. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting DC Act 22-499, "Access to Public Benefits Temporary Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

31. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-517, "Service Contract Regulation Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

32. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-516, "Teachers, Police, and Firefighters Retirement Benefits Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

33. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-515, "Trafficking Survivors Relief Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

34. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 22-505, "At-Risk Tenant Protection Clarifying Amendment Act of 2018", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); (87 Stat. 814); to the Committee on Oversight and Reform.