Black Caucus and keep faith with this historic role.

To some, they say we are the conscience of the Congress. But I say, under Chair FUDGE, we have been much, much more because we have not relied just on our conscience. We have risen to levels of involvement not achieved very often in this body.

On a personal note, it has been my pleasure to witness the growth and maturity of a leader I am proud to call not only my chair but my close personal friend as well. And I do not mean that in the way that we often use that word on this floor. She is a close personal friend.

Mr. Speaker, as you see here, we come from various backgrounds and experiences. I am from South Carolina; our chairlady is from Ohio. We have had a different set of experiences, which means that we will not always see things the same way. But what has made her an effective leader is the fact that she can look to the west, to Ms. BARBARA LEE, look south to Ms. JACKSON LEE, go down to Texas to Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, over to Alabama, and bring all of these experiences together and form a cohesive approach.

I am proud to call her my leader and proud to call her my personal friend.

I yield to the gentleman from Detroit (Mr. CONYERS), the dean of the Congressional Black Caucus who, come January 6, will be the dean of the entire United States Congress.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I feel, as all of us do, that we rise today to honor an accomplished public servant, an effective problem-solver, and a tireless advocate for our society's most vulnerable, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE of Ohio.

□ 1030

As she concludes her tenure as chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, she makes us all obligated to share our deep appreciation for her courage and her thoughtfulness.

Since taking office 6 years ago, Congresswoman FUDGE has been a national leader in the fight for job creation, the safety net, access to health care, and quality nutrition, and she has been able to motivate some 43 other Members of the Congressional Black Caucus in supporting these issues that have made her so outstanding.

It is fortuitous that she came to lead the Congressional Black Caucus at a time of unprecedented attacks on the Nation's nutrition-support systems that are essential for saving lives and eliminating the opportunity gap.

She has been unwavering and unstinting in her defense of people who rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP—as well as child nutrition and school feeding programs—for survival. There's no better way to reduce inequality than to ensure that children have access to the nutrition they need to prosper.

As the Senior Member of the Judiciary Committee, I am also extremely grateful for Chairwoman FUDGE's leadership and extraordinary insight and energy in advocating for voting rights and for victims of excessive force.

Chairwoman FUDGE has played an indispensable role in preserving the CBC's legacy as the "Conscience of the Congress."

MOURNING THE LOSS OF JUDY BAAR TOPINKA, ILLINOIS STATE COMPTROLLER

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

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today, my home State of Illinois mourns the loss of a great friend and a great leader, our State comptroller, Judy Baar Topinka.

I awoke this morning to my phone buzzing incessantly, and I was sad to pick up that phone and hear the news that my friend passed away unexpectedly early this morning. Illinois has lost a great leader.

Judy was somebody who was an institution in Republican politics in my home State. She was the most gregarious politician I have ever met in my life. Judy was somebody who made everyone feel at ease walking through the State capitol in Illinois. I am proud to represent that State capitol now in Springfield, and it is going to be a sad day to walk into that capitol and not see Judy.

Mr. Speaker, Judy was somebody who knew no strangers. If she met you, whether you were standing out in front of the capitol building guarding the door or if you were the Governor of the State of Illinois, she treated you the exact same way.

She is somebody who inspired me to get into this arena of public service. As a young candidate for State representative in 1996, I had the opportunity to have many people tell me that I shouldn't run, but I had Judy Baar Topinka to thank for encouraging me to go for it. I lost that race, but I made so many friends like Judy.

Judy came to my hometown of Taylorville to do some campaign events with me one day. It was summer. It was a long day of events, and Judy went to my house to lay down and rest for a bit. I had a 1-year-old Boston terrier bulldog who decided that he really liked Judy.

He jumped up on that couch and started kissing her in the only way that my dog knew how. He went right to her face. Instead of helping Judy, we took pictures. Since that day, every single time I have seen Judy Baar Topinka, she asks me about that dog. In 2012, when my dog Bruiser passed away, Judy was actually sad when I broke the news.

Illinois is going to lose not just my friend, but we lose our comptroller who was just reelected. Illinois mourns the loss of Judy, and I stand here today—with no intention of coming to the House floor—to talk about my friend. I mourn the loss of my friend.

Illinois will never be the same without Judy Baar Topinka, and America will never be the same without leaders like her.

THE FAA'S REPORT ON THE RESPONSE TO THE SABOTAGE AND FIRE AT CHICAGO CENTER

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

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, it is far too common for Members of Congress to come to the floor of this Chamber to weave their narrative of incompetent Federal bureaucracies, lazy and unresponsive members of the unionized Federal workforce, and greedy and irresponsible Federal contractors. I rise today to tell a very different story.

On September 26, 2014, commercial flights in nearly every airport around this country were delayed or canceled after the Chicago Air Route Traffic Control Center, also known as Chicago Center, in Aurora, Illinois, was disabled in an act of sabotage by a disturbed individual.

A fire destroyed the communications equipment that processes flight plan data and enabled air traffic controllers at the facility to communicate with pilots in the 91,000 square miles of airspace for which they are responsible. This could have led to a tragic loss of life. However, due to the efforts of controllers at Chicago Center and adjacent air traffic control facilities, all planes in the air when Chicago Center lost communications were landed safely.

Nearly 200 of the controllers at Chicago Center then traveled to 12 air traffic control towers and terminal radar approach controls throughout the Midwest to help direct air traffic. At the same time, technicians, mechanics, and electricians were working around the clock to replace damaged equipment and restore the Chicago Center facilities.

In total, they replaced 10 miles of cable, dozens of racks of computers, and 835 communication circuits to restore the center's voice communications, radar flight planning, and weather capabilities.

As a scientist who has installed giant experiments and accelerators on tight time scales, I respect what they have accomplished. Professional restoration crews also removed fire, soot, smoke, and water damage from the affected areas, and all of this was accomplished in just over 2 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, despite significant challenges, Chicago airports were able to operate at more than 90 percent capacity within days of the fire. One week after the fire, Administrator Huerta visited Chicago Center with me and my colleagues in the Senate to assess the progress of the restoration.

While it was clear that the damage had been extensive, I drew confidence from what I saw. Everyone understood what they needed to do for the sake of