

steady voice on so many issues since he has been here in Congress, especially on behalf of the most vulnerable in our society: the poor and the working poor. His voice and his work has certainly been a major contributor in terms of our task force growing to over 100 members. Thank you again for being a member of the task force and for what you do each and every day.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and my privilege to serve alongside you, Congresswoman, with all of the bigness of your heart and the care that you have for people, particularly those who are on their way up. You don't have anything against those who are already in place and doing well, but your heart is constantly on display toward those who are less fortunate. I am just privileged and honored to join you in that quest.

Today has been a great day. This morning, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the passage of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery in America. And to think back 150 years and look at the 100 years it took from that point to get to the point where we could pass a Voting Rights Act here in America, and then from that 50-year point up to today to be addressed by an African American President of the United States shows what kind of values we have in this country, what kind of opportunities we have in this country.

And so I am just filled with great tidings during this holiday season; however, I am not carried off by the winds of prosperity that may have come to some of us while to others the winds of prosperity have passed us by for various reasons, despite all of the progress that we have made as a people.

As it stands now, Congresswoman, it is not a Black or White thing; it is a people thing. We have more Caucasian Americans living in poverty than we have African Americans. So poverty is not a discriminator when it comes to national origin, when it comes to race, or when it comes to sex.

The fact is we have more women living in poverty and we have more children living in poverty. There is nothing to be joyful about that. We have more elderly people falling into poverty today.

My heart cries out for Caucasian Americans between the ages of 45 and 60 who, studies show, are meeting an early and untimely death at their own hands—suicide. Also, alcoholism and drug abuse are ravaging that particular demographic, as well as liver disease and other chronic ailments.

It all, I would posit, stems from the sense of hopelessness that pervades the people at this particular time. We see all of the prosperity. We see the prosperity of the few, the top 1 percent. You can look at the top 10 percent and see the concentration of wealth in this country. You see it, you watch the TV, and you aspire for all of the goods that are displayed to you on TV, but yet there is a sense of hopelessness about

you being able to achieve that, despite the fact that you are working two and three jobs and still qualify for food stamps and other social services.

We are realizing that, despite the hard work and the effort, the playing field is not level and the game is skewed in favor of the few on top at the expense of the masses on the bottom, and so something is wrong with that picture. That is an imbalance that we need to correct. So that is why I am so happy to work on the Out of Poverty Caucus.

Some say, "Why try? It can never be done"; but I am one of those who say that, if we don't try, it won't be done. If we try, it can make a difference.

I think that with the proper people in place to make the policy decisions that we make here in Congress, there is so much that we can do to relieve poverty in this country and to offer opportunity for people who only want to work hard and play by the rules. They long for the day to return when they can look at their children and their grandchildren and rest assured knowing that the opportunities for them will be at least, if not greater than, those that existed for themselves.

And so our job is to make things better on the ground for people. Our mission is to help those who need help. There are always going to be some people who need it, and there is nothing wrong with helping somebody who needs help. In fact, that is what living is all about: serving your fellow man. That is why I am here. I know that is why you are here, and I am just happy to serve with you.

I would add that it has been 51 years since 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson launched the War on Poverty, an ambitious set of initiatives to increase access to education, spur job growth, and improve nutrition and health to our poorest Americans. Fifty-one years later, it is estimated that up to 45 million Americans live in poverty. In the greatest Nation on Earth, there are 45 million starving children, impoverished seniors, and families that struggle every day to obtain the bare necessities to survive.

I know how it feels because, for 1 week, I tried to exist on the food stamp challenge with you, Congresswoman, and that was tough. I got off of it after, I think, about 5 days. To try to exist on what we give the average food stamp recipient is quite tough.

In Georgia, 25 percent of the people who are 50 or older and whose income level is less than \$22,000 a year struggle with hunger. In my district, that is an important issue, because in DeKalb County, 10 percent of the people live below the poverty line, and the majority of those are children. In Rockdale County, it is 13 percent.

Ms. LEE. I thank the gentleman for his message of hope tonight and for reminding us of the fact that poverty does take its toll on the mental health and well-being of the human spirit.

I want to thank all of the Members who participated. I hope we can move

in a bipartisan fashion to address some of the major, major issues that this body knows that it can address if it so chooses.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer remarks on poverty and income inequality in America in light of our recent budget discussions. In the world's most rich and powerful nation, more than 46 million Americans live in poverty. In Texas, 18 percent of residents live in poverty and 25 percent of children under 18 live in poverty. In Dallas, TX, the number of low-income people rose 41 percent between 2000 and 2012.

These numbers are staggering in a nation, state, and city with such wealth. Congress can and must do more to create opportunity for people who live in poverty. Passing a strong federal budget with anti-poverty programs, creating educational opportunities for students who come from low-income families, ensuring children and families have adequate food, advocating for a higher minimum wage, and keeping our federal health programs strong are just a few examples of the ways Congress can help lift these individuals and families out of poverty.

We know that these programs work. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) kept almost 5 million Americans, including 2.2 million children, out of poverty last year. Medical kept almost 3 million people out of poverty last year and that number continues to increase as more states expand Medicaid. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) helped to lift 10 million Americans, including 5 million children, out of poverty last year.

Anti-poverty programs not only help families rise above and stay out of poverty, they keep families contributing to the economy on a daily basis. Rather than keeping low-income Dallasites, Texans, and Americans on a tight-rope where they are one medical emergency, job loss, or large car expense away from dipping into poverty, we must bolster our resources. During the very year that we celebrated the 50th anniversary of several War on Poverty programs enacted by President Johnson, we must make it easier and not more difficult for working families in this country.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 381

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia (during the Special Order of Ms. LEE). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove myself from H.R. 381.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

FOREST MANAGEMENT AND WILDFIRES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the House