

I live in Nebraska, we are the geographic center of our country, where east meets west.

As a part of that trip, we also took a drive northward into the State of South Dakota, into the Black Hills, to a place called Mount Rushmore. It happened to be the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally that weekend, so I and about 2 million other bikers were on the road. Everyone knows the four faces on Mount Rushmore. Each of the four American Presidents embodied great qualities and faced significant challenges:

George Washington was a transcendent leader who purposefully walked away from power, giving our early Republic a chance to grow into a vibrant democracy;

Thomas Jefferson's life was seemingly full of conflicts and contradictions, but his efforts gave rise to the Declaration of Independence, which poetically expressed an understanding of the dignity and the rights of all persons, which so beautifully still informs our culture and our government to this day;

Abraham Lincoln made a midcourse correction in his life. He rejected an early snarky, political, antagonistic attitude and turned toward a vision of that which is noble and good. His reputation as a skillful and humble leader extended well beyond the Civil War to many important endeavors, including the development of land grant institutions all over this country, like the University of Nebraska;

Theodore Roosevelt had to rebuild his life after his wife died at a young age. His boundless energy, translating into multiple accomplishments, perhaps helped him outpace a haunting melancholy from which he suffered. As an avid hunter, he grew to recognize the importance of wildlife preservation. Beyond the natural places that he preserved, perhaps Roosevelt's greatest legacy was one of trust busting—breaking up concentrations of economic power that locked so many Americans out of a fair shot at economic opportunity.

Four great Presidents. Four men who sacrificed greatly to give us what we have today.

Today, Mr. Speaker, many people in the country are experiencing a serious disquiet about all of these challenges that we are facing. They feel disconnected from the ability to control their own well-being. These concentrations of power are overwhelming the capacity of individuals to shape their own environments. Political and economic and cultural cartels are growing more powerful, and, in some ways, they are more hidden and destructive than in Roosevelt's time.

Of course, today, political problems are on everyone's mind. This concentration of power stifles innovation and creativity; and as money flows into the political system, it pays for the polarization which hinders the ability of our body to find constructive solutions.

This transcends, by the way, the current partisan divide.

Our increasingly interconnected world offers significant benefits and opportunities to us, but globalization also introduces forces that can leave so many Americans feeling helpless. Transnational corporate conglomerates, often buttressed by oligarchic political systems, are shrinking the space for genuine choice and competition in the private sphere. As I talked about earlier, the stress of small business is very real. This concentration of economic power endangers true free market principles, which should be working for the many.

On a deeper level, America's political disrepair and economic malaise signal an underlying brokenness in our society, in our culture. Persons—humans—thrive in relationships with our families and communities in a healthy society, which creates the preconditions for this human flourishing. Cultural consolidation and social discord have left more and more people, again, feeling directionless and feeling alone. Weakening relationships and weakening social institutions foreshadow and prefigure political and economic problems. Ultimately, renewing America—restoring America's government and economy—requires reclaiming a vibrant civil society, which is the true source of our Nation's strength.

Mr. Speaker, if you have ever driven through those Black Hills, which I spoke of earlier—the one-lane tunnels and winding hairpin turns—they form a very beautiful but a very arduous journey, even without all the motorcycles around you. As you continue that journey, looking for something, an opening then appears in the trees, and you see it—that magnificent piece of art, carved in stone, with four of America's greatest Presidents.

Their likenesses are in the rock, timeless and unchanging; but the ideals they represent must be reestablished in each generation. The renewal of America will depend, in large part, on whether or not we can grasp what these leaders stood for and whether or not we can make the sacrifices necessary to reclaim our country's potential in this time, our time.

Mr. Speaker, what we all do matters.

I yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, December 11, 2015, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

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

3740. A letter from the Director, Issuances Staff, Office of Policy and Program Develop-

ment, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Mandatory Inspection of Fish of the Order Siluriformes and Products Derived From Such Fish [Docket No.: FSIIS-2008-0031] (RIN: 0583-AD36) received December 8, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Added by Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

3741. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting notification that the Department intends to assign women to previously closed positions and units across all Services and U.S. Special Operations Command, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 652(a); Public Law 109-163, Sec. 541(a)(1); (119 Stat. 3251) and 10 U.S.C. 6035(a); Public Law 106-398, Sec. 573(a)(1); (114 Stat. 1654A-136); to the Committee on Armed Services.

3742. A letter from the Under Secretary, Comptroller, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's semiannual report on the account balance in the Defense Cooperation Account and a listing of personal property contributed, as of September 30, 2015, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608(i); Public Law 101-403, title II, Sec. 202(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 103-160, Sec. 1105(b)); (107 Stat. 1750); to the Committee on Armed Services.

3743. A letter from the Under Secretary, Comptroller, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's semiannual report on the account balance in the Defense Cooperation Account and a listing of personal property contributed, as of September 30, 2015, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608(i); Public Law 101-403, title II, Sec. 202(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 103-160, Sec. 1105(b)); (107 Stat. 1750); to the Committee on Armed Services.

3744. A letter from the Comptroller, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Department of the Treasury, transmitting the Office's annual report on actions taken to carry out Sec. 308 of the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989, pursuant to 12 U.S.C. 1463 note; Public Law 111-203, Sec. 367(c); (124 Stat. 1556); to the Committee on Financial Services.

3745. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's 2013 Report to Congress on Outcome Evaluations of Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Projects, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 2992(e); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

3746. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Education, transmitting the Department's FY 2015 Agency Financial Report, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a); (104 Stat. 2849); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3747. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's Semiannual Report to Congress for the period April 1 through September 30, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) Sec. 5(b); Public Law 95-452, Sec. 5(b); (92 Stat. 1103); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3748. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting the Office's semiannual report to Congress for the period of April 1, 2015, to September 30, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) Sec. 5(b); Public Law 95-452, Sec. 5(b); (92 Stat. 1103); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3749. A letter from the Director, Peace Corps, transmitting the Corps' Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2015, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a); (104 Stat. 2849); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3750. A letter from the Acting Administrator, United States Agency for International Development, transmitting the