

I thank Congressman KILDEE so much for coming down tonight.

Mr. KILDEE. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and for her leadership. Congresswoman KAPTUR has always been a great ally for me and even my predecessor, my uncle, on working to preserve and protect this incredible natural asset that we have—the Great Lakes.

Listening to Congresswoman KAPTUR and Congressman KELLY refer to your childhood, we all—those of us from the Great Lakes region—remember and recall, from our childhood, our introduction to the Great Lakes.

The very shape of my home State of Michigan is defined by the lakes. Lake Huron is on the east, Lake Michigan is on the west, a touch of Lake Erie, and, of course, Lake Superior to the north. It defines the shape of our State.

As a child, I still remember the first time experiencing the lakes, and they did seem as though they were something that were so big, they was almost impossible to comprehend. But it was also something that, as a child, I took for granted. We all took for granted that the lakes would always be there, that they would always be pure, that they would always be clear and cold—the way we recalled them as children.

Of course, what we come to know, as policymakers, is that we can't be put in a position to take that for granted. We have to actively protect that incredible gift that has been handed to us simply as a creation of God. We have this enormously special stewardship.

Two things I want to point out that I think are part of the stewardship responsibility that we have to and for the Great Lakes. One, of course, is to defend the lakes against any threat that might manifest now or might manifest generations from now, whether that is working to protect the lakes from invasive species like Asian carp or a very special obligation that I think we have right now, working with our friends across the border on the Canadian side, and that is to protect the lakes from unnecessary and unwarranted threats.

There has been, in the planning stages, the possibility of a nuclear waste storage facility that would be on the eastern shore of Lake Huron. It would be six-tenths of a mile from the shore of that lake. I am pleased to see that our friends within the new Canadian Government have sort of taken a pause to reevaluate whether that site is the best site. Of course, my position and the position of many Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, has been that there is a special line that we must draw when it comes to protecting the lakes.

We have a chance to ask that—in this case, the Canadian Government, and specifically the Ontario Power Generation—they reconsider the location of a nuclear waste storage facility so that now, 100 or 200 years from now, if some event may occur that would release some of that material, we would never put the lakes at risk.

That is something that we can do. It is a tangible set of steps that we can take. But it is just an example of the special responsibility that I know I now have as a Member of Congress representing the Great Lakes region.

It is not until you are sworn into office and take an oath to uphold the Constitution and represent the people that you live with back home that you come to understand the magnitude of that responsibility, especially for maintaining the lakes.

Of course, the other point that Congresswoman KAPTUR mentioned is that we also have a special responsibility to continue to take advantage of the fact that we have been given this gift, and we have to use it in a way that is sustainable but also allows us to use the pure and clear lake water in a way that protects us.

Of course, the very bad decisions that were made at the State government level that led to the crisis in my hometown of Flint were decisions to move temporarily away from using lake water for our drinking water to using river water in the Flint River as our primary drinking water source. It is almost unimaginable that that would happen, considering that we are literally surrounded by the greatest source, the largest source of surface freshwater on the planet and that a community would temporarily use that drinking water.

It also makes the point that the protections of our water resources are special protections that we have to make sure are adhered to. This crisis in Flint, or any other crisis, such as the issue that I know Congresswoman KAPTUR is very familiar with—you may have already addressed the algal bloom that you dealt with in the lake that affected drinking water in Toledo and other places—we have a special responsibility to make sure that we are, through our Environmental Protection Agency and State environmental quality agencies, aggressively defending the Great Lakes, not just to maintain their natural beauty, not just to maintain them as recreational assets, but to make sure that, when we use that water for something as fundamental as drinking water, we know it will always be safe and protected.

I want to thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on the issue of the Great Lakes and for including me as a part of this bipartisan effort to make sure that we always take care of this unique and special stewardship responsibility to protect the greatest freshwater source on the planet.

Ms. KAPTUR. I thank Congressman KILDEE so very, very much for coming down. He has his hands full in trying to repair the damage in Flint. We respect him so much for the leadership he has shown there, because that could happen anywhere. Sadly, it happened in Flint, Michigan, and he and the delegation and the entire Great Lakes region have really provided stellar leadership.

We all are here to try and help him and the citizens of Flint. He is focusing

national attention on the importance of water infrastructure and what can happen when systems age. You have brought this to the attention of the American people. We can all learn from the experience in Flint.

I want to thank my colleagues for coming to the floor tonight to discuss the important challenges that still remain in the Great Lakes of water infrastructure improvement, addressing the harmful algal blooms, making sure there is significant support in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, stopping the Asian carp from coming into the Great Lakes, improving our Great Lakes navigation system, and making sure that the harbor maintenance trust fund is available for the Great Lakes.

I yield back the balance of my time.

MAJOR OVERHAUL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I don't think there is any question that, if you go anywhere in this country, the American people believe that this town, Washington, and this institution in particular need a major overhaul.

The Founding Fathers conceived of a system in which individual Americans, individual citizens would stand for election and they would go up as representatives of the people, but they were no better than the people. They didn't live under different rules than the rest of the people. They were not part of a ruling class, but, really, part of a servant culture. That was the idea.

Well, we have come a long way. Washington, D.C., is really the bane of the existence for many, many people in our society. It hinders our economy. You have people here who engage in self-dealing. It is not acting consistently with how this system was envisioned.

So there are a lot of things I would like to do:

I think Congress needs to be forced to live under all the laws they pass and enact for other people.

I think you need to get rid of a lot of the perks that Members of Congress get, including pensions for Members of Congress.

But I think if there was one thing that, I think, really cries out for reform, it is that we need to have term limits for Members of Congress. I don't think there is any way you are ever going to be able to overhaul this culture unless we do that.

There was a time when people would get elected and the Founders didn't think anyone would want to be here that long. You would go, you would serve, then you would go back and live under the laws that you passed and continue your pursuits as a citizen. Well, somewhere along the line, that really changed. Then people come in,

and it is almost like that is the main thing that they focus on: just staying here, sometimes in perpetuity. People have served 40, 50 years, and I don't think that that has turned out well for our country.

I think if you had term limits, I think you would really open up the process for new blood. I think people would come in here with a reformer spirit, new ideas, and really be part of a reform movement in Washington, D.C.

It is often said: Well, gee, term limits. But the American people get their choice. They get to vote in the election. The fact of the matter is, the way that our electoral system works, millions and millions of Americans have no functional choice simply because maybe their district is only going to elect someone from one party. Maybe you have the power of incumbency that just makes it so that challengers are never going to be able to get traction.

□ 1715

The whole campaign finance system is orchestrated to benefit incumbents, so we don't really just have where the American people have a choice. I think you have a structured choice, which typically leads to only one outcome. So I am not really somebody that thinks that this is all just that the American people are so happy that people are getting returned here all the time.

Another, I think, objection that some people said for term limits is that: Well, gee, if you term-limit people, you have new people in who don't necessarily know how the system works. It is just going to be all the staff that are going to run it or the lobbyists that are going to run it.

I have got news for you. That is pretty much what happens already. I mean, a lot of these omnibus bills, those get done by staff behind closed doors. Staff wields a lot of power on these committees. And these are not elected individuals. Many of them work hard. I respect a lot of them, but they are exercising, in many ways, authority that should be exercised by the Members, themselves. So I think that problem is real, but I think it is already here.

I think if you had new people coming in, I think a lot of those people would probably want to bring in some of their own staff that would be more reflective of their ideas and principles rather than rely on people that have been here a long time who really become accustomed to a system that is not working very well.

I am proud to have cosponsored the bill to enact term limits on Members of the House and Members of the Senate. We do three terms for the House, and two terms for the Senate. So if someone wants to serve in the House then serve in the Senate, they could serve 18 years. That is a long time, and I think you would be able to really do some good things during that period.

I think what it does is it really shifts the focus of somebody that comes here,

because right now, if you get elected to the House, you are on the low end of the pecking order in terms of seniority. I mean, you almost have to just sit around here for 10, 15, 20 years to be in a position where you could really make a huge difference. I think what that does is that creates a culture in which people want to stay here, and that is kind of the main thing that happens once you get here.

I think, if you had term limits, the main thing that people would be thinking about is: Okay. You know you are term-limited. Your time is limited. Let's make the most of that. I think you would see a lot of people really, really perform much better. You would have people who could come in as freshmen and have more of an impact because the system wouldn't be dominated by seniority. There would be less favoritism, less backroom dealing. So I think it is a very, very positive reform.

We have been voting on random things here lately. I think it would be great if we could come here and offer some reforms to the system, constitutional reforms, like term limits, like a balanced budget amendment, like an amendment making Congress live under the laws that everybody else does. I think that would be a breath of fresh air for the American people.

Here is the thing. We talk about how we have the division and the rancor in our politics, and even in this institution; but if you look, term limits is something that, regardless of party, regardless of ideology, regardless of age, regardless of gender, regardless of race, Americans support in overwhelming numbers.

So I think that is an example of where the American people are actually very united for this. But when you have the governing class in Washington, that is where the divisions are, because many people don't want to see those types of reforms here.

But there is agreement throughout American society, and so if we want to start having a more unified country, we should be listening to the American people. When they are speaking loudly and consistently over 20, 25 years that term limits is something they want, we should heed that call, and we should be voting on that, and we should enact it, passing it out of the House, passing it out of the Senate, and then sending it to the States for ratification. What a win-win it would be, both for this institution, to show the American people we are listening, and then, obviously, it would be a very positive reform to have enacted.

I am really happy that, as new people come in, that they have the reformer's spirit. One of the guys who just got elected this last year—it is pretty clear when people get up here whether they are in it for the right reasons or not, and I think there are probably few people in the whole House who have been more dedicated to reform and making this institution serve the American people rather than rule over the Amer-

ican people. It is a great honor for me to be able to yield to my friend from Iowa (Mr. BLUM), the chairman of the House Term Limits Caucus.

Mr. BLUM. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) for hosting this Special Order on term limits and giving me the opportunity to speak on this most important subject.

Albert Einstein once said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again, yet expecting different results. That quote sums up Washington, D.C. We keep sending the same people back here over and over and over, yet we expect things will improve; we expect things will change.

Congressional approval ratings, if you haven't checked, are in the single digits. It is clear that the American people aren't happy with the job we are doing. They want change in Washington, D.C.

But, if we truly want to change Washington, we need to heed Albert Einstein's advice. We need to send different people here. We need to do things differently.

Changing the way Congress operates should start with enacting term limits. I firmly believe congressional term limits would restore the public's confidence in the legislative branch and return this body back to the design intended by our Founding Fathers.

I have just been here, as my friend, Mr. DESANTIS said, for over a year, and I can confidently say that term limits for our politicians would be a huge step forward in changing the culture here in Washington, D.C., and I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense reform.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first elected office I have ever held. I am a career small-business person. In the private sector, if we don't listen to our customers, we go out of business.

In Congress, our customers are the American people, and they are strongly in favor of term limits. Recent polls show overwhelming support. Over 75 percent of Americans want term limits. This support, as Mr. DESANTIS said, crosses party lines, with strong majorities from Democrats, Republicans, and Independents alike.

Unfortunately, Congress has not listened to our customers. Legislation to institute term limits continues to sit in committee, without receiving a vote. While many Members of Congress profess support for term limits back in their districts, when their plane crosses the Potomac, something seems to change.

One of the first things I did after being sworn in was to launch the bipartisan Term Limits Caucus, along with my colleague from Texas (Mr. O'ROURKE). I also cosponsored legislation from my colleagues, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS), limiting House Members to serving no more than three terms and

Senators to serving no more than two terms.

I did this because, as someone coming to Congress from the private sector, I believe Washington suffers from a lack of fresh, innovative ideas. Also, Washington suffers from a lack of political courage on the part of career politicians to implement those changes.

The root of our problem is that our politicians are incentivized by this system to care more about staying in office rather than doing what is best for the country.

Most candidates campaign for the U.S. House and they say something to the effect, "Washington, D.C., is broken. Washington, D.C., is broken. It must change." They say this during the campaign. Most come here for the right reasons, but, over time, the system grinds them down. The special interests get their proverbial "nose under the tent," and before long, special interests own a Congressman.

It seems to me, the only special interest group not represented in Washington is "We, the People." The end result is most become part of the very problem they came to Washington, D.C., to fix.

Our Founding Fathers never intended for public service to be a career. Serving in Congress was supposed to be a temporary sacrifice made for the public good, not a profitable, long-term profession treated like a family business.

By limiting terms politicians can serve in office, we can realign the incentives. When Members of Congress know they will only serve for a short amount of time, they will be incentivized to actually tackle the big problems facing America today: tackling our \$19 trillion debt that is growing, tackling the looming insolvency of Social Security and Medicare, and tackling the securing of our borders and the ever-growing Federal bureaucracy that stifles economic growth and holds down wages for your average American.

Mr. DESANTIS, I recognize the long odds of Congress voting to place term limits on themselves. As I often say, that is much like asking turkeys to vote for Thanksgiving, and we know how that would end up. But I will keep pushing Congress to act, because it is what the American people want.

In the meantime, there are some positive active developments at the State level that I would like to highlight.

Florida recently became one of the first States to officially call for an Article V constitutional term limits convention thanks to the hard work of Florida activists and fantastic groups like U.S. Term Limits. I commend the Florida Legislature and hope other States will soon follow suit.

As President Reagan once said, a "convention is a safety valve giving the people a chance to act if Congress refuses to."

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to criticize individual Members of Congress, and not all of my colleagues who have been in office for decades are part of this problem; but it is time Congress listened to our customers and gives our customers what they want: a vote on term limits. It is the right thing to do, and it may be our last and best chance to restore trust in government and make Congress work for the American people once again.

Once again, I thank Mr. DESANTIS for the opportunity to discuss this most important subject. I urge my colleagues to listen to the American people and join the Term Limits Caucus and cosponsor term limit legislation.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Iowa.

The thing is that you bring up a good point. It is very difficult to get people to want to term-limit themselves. So you and I are on a bill together that tries to be reasonable about it and say: Look, you know, we are willing to compromise to get term limits. You have Members who have been here for 12, 14 years and they are trying to put themselves in a position for a chairmanship, whatever, and they joined under certain rules, they kind of played the game, and they are preparing for maybe this to be the pinnacle of their career. I get why someone in that situation would not want to do it.

Our proposal says: Okay. Let's do term limits, but then we will phase it in as new Members come. So that is a kind of a gradual term limit enactment, and within a short while you would have term limits across the board. I mean, that is something that is a reasonable compromise to deal with some of the Members that have misgivings.

I think my friend from Iowa points out, I mean, if this were something that were to be done via Article V of the Constitution and submitted through the States around Congress, that would be enacted in a New York minute. I mean, that will sail through every State legislature without question, and you would end up having term limits.

So I think there are two different routes to take, but I think knowing that there is a desire for this, I think it would be good for this institution to say: Okay. We hear you. Let's debate it; let's put everyone on record. Then the American people can hold people accountable accordingly.

That is really, I think, what is frustrating. It would be one thing if term limits just failed every year, but, really, it gets bottled up every year because people don't want to be on record against term limits. I think that those days need to be over.

I ask my friend from Iowa, as you go around your district—you have Republicans, Democrats; you have a very politically diverse district—I mean, is there anybody who is out there saying don't do term limits?

Mr. BLUM. In 3 years of campaigning, I have not yet, Mr. DESANTIS,

met one person in my district in north-east Iowa that is against term limits. Everyone wants us to hold a vote on term limits.

And I consistently say this gets buried in committee because the worst nightmare of anybody in this body is to have to go on record as voting against term limits because, as I said in my speech, they go back to their districts and they say they are for reforming Congress.

They are against the pension program. They are against first-class air travel. They are against \$1,200-a-month luxury car leases. They are against becoming lobbyists when they retire from this body. They say they are for term limits. Their plane crosses the Potomac. They get in this body. They don't want to vote on those things because I think they are not really against them.

People are tired of that. They are seeing through it. They are demanding that we have this vote. All we ask—all you are asking, all I am asking—is let's get this out of committee. Let's have a vote on this floor and see what happens. It may fail, but at least we got the vote; at least the people in my district and in your district in Florida were represented and had the chance to have a voice.

□ 1730

I think this is an overwhelmingly bipartisan issue. I am Republican, and my district is Democratic. But Democrats want a vote on term limits as well.

I come from the private sector, RON, and we listen to our customers. Our customers are the American voters, the American citizens.

We are not listening to them. We are ignoring them. I think we are seeing it now in this political season, that people are upset with what goes on in Washington, D.C.

Our approval rating—and it has been well earned—is in the single digits. I think it would go so far if we would just hold some votes and try to reform this body because people often tell me: Before you tell me to reform the way my family spends their money, why don't you clean up your own House first? I couldn't agree with them more.

Mr. DESANTIS. I think that, if we were to approach it and say that we need to do term limits, we have to make sure Congress lives under the same rules, no special treatment under ObamaCare, none of that, let's eliminate the pensions for Congress—and the thing is you brought up people being lobbyists after they are in Congress.

If you did term limits, guess what. Then you are going to increase the supply of former Members of Congress. So being a lobbyist wouldn't be as lucrative because there would be a lot more people who are out there.

I think actually more people would say: Maybe I will go back to my home State and start working in business there and maybe have to come to terms

with some of the laws that I imposed on the private sector and see how that works.

So I think it would be good for the performance in office, but I also think, as Members left office, it probably would drive more people to the actual private sector rather than being inside the Beltway because you will just have too many former Members and I don't think the pay will be as lucrative.

Right now, I don't know if this is accurate, but I have seen statistics where it is upwards of 80 percent of people who serve in the Congress go on to be lobbyists in Washington. So you understand the system, then you go out and are lobbying to grease the skids in that system. That is not the way I think that we want this system to be operating.

So let me ask you this: In terms of getting a vote, what do you think we need to be doing to impress upon other colleagues so that we can start to develop some momentum to try to get a vote on this?

Mr. BLUM. Some of them need to lose their reelection campaigns. I have consistently said, RON, that true change never comes from inside the Beltway in Washington, D.C. It always comes from out in America.

What we need are grass-roots activists, people that follow what we are doing, to call, to email, and to text to let our Representatives know that you want a vote on term limits.

As a Representative, and I am sure you would agree that those matter. We listen. I listen. We track every phone call, and I get a report at the end of the day saying:

Here is who called from your district, and here is what they wanted.

So it makes a difference. Change never comes from in Washington, D.C.

I would also like to follow up on another point that you made earlier. It was a great point, and that is seniority.

I came here as a freshman 14 months ago and I quickly found out that everything in Congress is based on seniority. Not to take anything away from these fine people that have been here a long time, they have worked very hard, they have paid their dues, and it is nothing personal, but people wonder why change can't happen in Washington, D.C.

It is because we have the same people running the show year in, year out, term in, term out, because it is based on seniority.

A young person like me—well, I shouldn't say young. A young politician—I am 60 years old—doesn't really have a chance to impact change much because the power structure is all based on seniority here.

I wish they would look at seniority out in the real world, in the private sector. What did you do to build a company? What did you do to educate children? What did you do in the medical community?

That seniority should count as well, just not your time spent in this body.

So that is a great point. That is why I think things don't change. We need change. Change is good. We need new ideas and fresh ideas and people with political courage.

Another thing that has been a little bit disappointing to me is the lack of political courage, to take a stand and to plant the flag even if it is going to be unpopular in the district. If you think it is the right thing to do, go for it. Have political courage.

People have said to me: How do we know you won't change if we send you to Washington?

I have consistently said: Because I am not afraid to be unelected. I want to be reelected. I will work hard. I will want to win a second term. But I am not afraid to lose an election.

We need more people like that, RON. We need people who don't want to stay here a lifetime and turn this, the United States Congress, into a family business.

Mr. DESANTIS. It is interesting with the seniority discussion. I was in the Navy. In the military, your time in service matters for pay purposes and other, but along the line you have to actually promote. You have to earn a promotion.

So there will be some people who are commanders, O-5s, who have been in for—I don't know—I guess you could probably get that after 12 or 13 years. And then there are some people who are lieutenant commanders, O-4, who have been in 20 years.

Well, if you have been in 20, you have more seniority in the sense that you have been there longer, but the person who achieved the higher rank through merit is superior to you in the military chain of command. I think the problem with the way the congressional system operates is it is purely based on years staying here.

Some of the best Members who have ever served here have served for 30, 35 years. So this is not uniform. But I think, if you compared the good that those Members have done with the negatives of all the other folks who have just made this their fiefdom, I think the negatives outweigh the positives.

I think that Congressman BLUM is right. Ultimately, the American people need to force this issue. Part of it is calling the offices. I review the phone calls every day, too.

I think one of the most effective things is in a public forum to just pointblank ask a Member of Congress if they will vote for Salmon's bill or RON DESANTIS' term limit bill and put them on the Record.

The more people that are on the Record as for it, it makes it easier for us to then take the case to the leadership and say that we need to do this.

I think it would be a breath of fresh air. I think people are so frustrated and so sick of the same old games being played in Washington that, if we started coming out with some of these reforms, leading with term limits, I think people would be reading the

newspaper and shaking their heads and saying: Really? These guys are finally getting it.

Really, this is something that, if you take the long view when you are doing the right thing like that, then voters will have more confidence in your views on other things.

So maybe you are interested in tax reform. Maybe you are interested in welfare reform. Guess what. You are doing term limits. You are doing those things. I bet you a lot of voters would be less cynical about what you are trying to do on a whole range of issues.

So I think it would be a win-win both in terms of structural reform, but also potential policy reforms down the line.

Let me ask my friend from Iowa: Is there anything else you want to add to the discussion? I really appreciate your time. I think it has been worthwhile. I think we need to keep fighting the good fight.

Mr. BLUM. I agree with you. We will always storm the hill, my good friend, and plant that flag, regardless of how many times we need to do it.

But I would just like to mention some of the bills I have been involved with:

Eliminating first-class airline travel for congressional Members paid for by taxpayers. Most of the people in my district have never flown in first class. There is no reason I should be flying first class on taxpayer dollars.

Eliminating the \$1,200-a-month luxury car leases that we can lease back in our districts. That is more than most house payments in northeast Iowa. It would eliminate that.

We need to eliminate the congressional pension program. We need to eliminate the ability to become a lobbyist after you have served in this body.

We need to tie our pay to the pay of the average American. The average American has not had a pay raise in over 20 years. The average American's pay has gone backwards.

This body's pay should go backwards just like the average American's. The words used in polls is that we are out of touch. I wonder if this body is not out of touch, if we are not tone deaf. We need to be tied to the average American.

I recently introduced a bill that, if we didn't balance the budget, then we would get a pay cut; if it is not balanced next year, we get a deeper pay cut; and if we keep not balancing it, we are going to end up making no money. Maybe this way it will get through everyone's head that this is a serious issue and we need to balance the budget.

I agree with you, RON, that any of these reforms voted on would go so far, I think, to the American people to say:

Finally, finally, Washington, D.C. is listening to us. They finally get it.

The frustration is palpable in my district. It probably is in yours. People are really upset. They say that they don't listen, the laws don't apply to us like they do the rest of Americans.

I couldn't agree more. As a citizen, I am every bit as frustrated as well. So you can always count on me to storm the hill with you, my friend.

Mr. DESANTIS. I appreciate it. In your bill, when you said, hey, balance the budget or else face a pay cut, I signed up on that immediately. I think that is a great idea.

We need to have personal skin in the game because what happens is, when you are here in Washington, particularly dealing with spending and debt, it is a lot easier politically for most Members to just put it off on the next generation.

These are people that can't vote you out of office. They are not going to call your office and complain about it. So it is usually the path of least resistance to do that.

So there is not a lot of immediate skin in the game short of us eventually having a debt crisis. Obviously, we don't want it to come to that. We want to make responsible decisions now.

So I applaud you for that. I thought that was a very thoughtful reform. I am happy to be signed up with you. Term limits, as part of a larger government reform package, I think would be a home run. I look forward to working with you on it.

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

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friends, Congressman BLUM and the future Senator DESANTIS, for great words and great insights.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to answer a couple of questions that people have had about a couple of votes that my friends, JUSTIN AMASH and THOMAS MASSIE, and I had.

One is on H.R. 4742. It is described to authorize the National Science Foundation to support entrepreneurial programs for women.

Since my wife and I have been blessed with three beautiful daughters, inside and out, all three of them absolutely brilliant—these type of things are important to me—but I note that it says, "studies have shown that technology and commercialization ventures are successful when women are in top management positions."

It also puts into law that the requirement that, under the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act, it is required that the National Science Foundation encourage its entrepreneurial programs to recruit and support women to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and into the commercial world.

Now, it just seems like—and I know these are incredibly well intended. Both H.R. 4742 and H.R. 4745 are very,

very well intended. Wonderful people put them forward. I understand that.

But just from my experience and from the common sense I hear as I get all over east Texas, it just seems like Washington is always a step behind or—an old saying—a day late and a dollar short.

Now we are \$19 trillion short. But we want to take time from our \$19 trillion in debt to demand that the National Science Foundation discriminate based on gender.

There may be some young boy who needs encouragement from a tough family situation, but this program is designed to discriminate against that young, poverty-stricken boy and to encourage the girl. Forget the boy. Encourage the girl.

It just seems that, if we are ever going to get to the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., that he spoke just down the Mall, he wanted people to be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin.

I know after race has been an issue that needed attention, then gender appropriately got attention, because the whole Constitution of the United States, when it is properly read verbatim, means men, women, race, creed, color, national origin, and gender.

Those things are not supposed to matter. It just seems like, when we come in and we say that it is important that for a while we discriminate, we end up getting behind.

And then probably 25 years from now boys are going to have fallen behind in numbers, and then we are going to need to come in and say: Actually, when we passed that bill forcing encouragement of girls and not encouraging of little boys, we were getting behind the eight ball. We didn't see that we were going to be leaving little boys in the ditch, and now we need to start doing programs to encourage little boys.

We are always going to be behind until we get around to saying from this House floor that we don't care where you are from, we don't care what your gender is, and we don't care what you like look. You may be as homely as Abraham Lincoln. We don't care what you look like.

We don't care about the color of your hair or the lack of hair. We don't care. We want you not to have an equal outcome, but to have an equal opportunity to excel, and then let the best person do the best job and excel. That is what has made free market systems work so well.

□ 1745

I was reminded to check out a lady that is known as Madame Curie, Marie Skłodowska Curie, Madame Curie. It says she was born in Warsaw, then the Kingdom of Poland.

Her achievements included the development of the theory of radioactive isotopes and the discovery of two elements: polonium and radium. Under her direction, the world's first studies

were conducted into the treatment of neoplasms, using radioactive isotopes; she founded the Curie Institutes in Paris and in Warsaw; and she won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in radiation.

So as I think about it, it has got to be millions and millions of lives that this brilliant woman, Madame Curie, has saved because of her work. She died early at 66 because of her work in the laboratory—she had aplastic anemia, apparently from her work with radioactive isotopes—but the lives that woman saved by her work in the laboratory.

However, if our bill, H.R. 4742, had been in law back in Poland or France as she tried to move forward, the Science Foundation there would have been required to tell Madame Curie: Do you know what? You are pretty good in the laboratory, but under this law from the wisdom of Congress, we are supposed to tell you to go into commercial enterprise and make a whole bunch more money because you are better off not being in the laboratory but being out in the commercial world because you will be a better businessperson than men. You need to get out there.

I thank God that there wasn't a program like this that distracted her. This brilliant, caring woman basically gave her life to save many, many millions by the phenomenal work she did in the laboratory.

But according to the bill that we passed today, we are requiring the Science Foundation to encourage entrepreneurial programs to recruit and support women to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and into the commercial world. Thank God that is not what Madame Curie did.

We did have another bill. Part of the program is good for boys and girls, but then there is a part, *Aspire to Inspire*, that engages young girls to present science, technology, engineering, and mathematics career opportunities, et cetera.

And on the next one, provide an opportunity for female middle school students. We don't want to provide an opportunity under this bill for boys. Let the boys fight, let them get into gangs; but the women, the young girls, that is who we want to encourage.

In section 3, NASA shall—not just may, but shall—encourage women and girls to study science, technology, and engineering.

I was inspired in a little town in Mount Pleasant, Texas, growing up by people who encouraged boys and girls equally. We had some very, very smart girls and we had some smart guys. Our teachers really didn't care whether we were boys or girls. They wanted us to work hard and they wanted us to excel. They were incredibly good teachers, and I learned so much. I learned so much in math that in college algebra at Texas A&M, I didn't have to open my book but for 15 minutes for the final. That is all I had to do for the