

alive the free spirit of Poland during foreign occupation and tyranny for a century-and-a-quarter. Then, in 1918, with the help of President Woodrow Wilson following World War I, they triumphed in bringing their nation back onto the map of Europe in the form of a republic.

Today, American and Polish military cooperation through NATO is critical to defending the spirit of liberty. Let this resolution serve to reaffirm the close bonds between our two great nations.

ENCOURAGE CONSTITUENTS TO SIGN UP FOR A HEALTH PLAN

(Ms. JAYAPAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, in Burien, Washington, tomorrow, we will be holding an event to provide constituents information on signing up for healthcare coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

With open enrollment season beginning last week, I want to make sure that residents of our district know that they have until December 15 to sign up. And while the Republican majority has been undermining the ACA at every turn, the numbers that are coming in tell a completely different story about how important this act is for thousands of Americans across the country.

More than 200,000 Americans chose a plan on the first day of open enrollment, which is more than double last year. This is all on top of the more than 1 million people who visited healthcare.gov, the official Federal website; a one-third increase in traffic from 2016.

Mr. Speaker, our State exchange in Washington State has reported a 19 percent increase in visits from last year. The surge in enrollment is promising and it is a clear repudiation of the Republican's efforts to strip healthcare from millions across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to spread the word about how their constituents can get covered.

PROVIDE MORE FOR FEMALE VETERANS

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, female veterans represent the military's fastest-growing population with an estimated 2.2 million women, including 14,000 in my home State of Hawaii, who have served our country. Yet, when these women come home or transition to civilian life, they are still facing a VA that was created by and for men and is ill-equipped to understand and serve their unique needs.

Women veterans have lower rates of access to the VA than men, but face higher rates of post-traumatic stress

disorder, military sexual assaults, unemployment, and homelessness. We have a responsibility to take care of all of our veterans when they return home, and to make sure that they are getting the best care and benefits that they have earned and deserve.

In recognition of Veterans Day, we must fix this and pass the Deborah Sampson Act to eliminate barriers and improve quality of care and services, and empower our female veterans alongside our male veterans.

I urge all of my colleagues to pass this legislation to address the glaring gender disparities at the VA and to ensure that our women veterans receive the services that they have earned and deserve.

BILLIONAIRES-FIRST TAX BILL

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

Mr. NORCROSS. Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak about the Republican's billionaires-first tax bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Tax Policy Center determined they will raise taxes for approximately 38 million middle class households. Americans agree that we need more jobs, higher wages, and lower taxes. But the Republican bill rewards billionaires, prioritizes corporate profits, and hurts working families.

It is welfare for the wealthy paid for by the hardworking middle class American. It fails the President's own Trump test, which says their tax plan would not benefit the wealthiest of us. Guess what. It does.

Worst of all, New Jersey families suffer the most. The bill guts the critical State and local tax deduction. That means one-fourth of all New Jerseyans will be paying more taxes.

Why should billionaires receive tax relief instead of New Jersey's middle class families?

Americans must reject this billionaires-first, bloated, backwards bill. It will do nothing to raise wages or bring real relief for working families.

□ 1745

PUBLIC HOUSING IMPERATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to shed light and to

put a face on an imperative issue, the imperative issue of affordable housing. I am here representing neighborhoods like Marble Hill, Inwood, Washington Heights, Hamilton Heights, Morningside Heights, Harlem and east Harlem, and the northwest Bronx.

Public housing and public housing capital funding is imperative for many of my constituents. Just to shed some light on the magnitude of this problem, Mr. Speaker, in the 13th Congressional District, there are 62 housing developments—62 public housing developments.

There are a total of 340 buildings, and, within those buildings, there are 34,609 apartments where families live; so 62 housing developments out of 326 for the entire city of New York, 340 buildings out of 2,462 buildings in the city of New York, and 34,609 apartments out of 176,692 apartments across the city of New York.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, public housing houses over 400,000 residents. It is larger than many cities in many States across the Nation, and public housing capital funding is imperative and necessary for my constituents.

Not only do these residents rely on stable, affordable housing to stay close to their families and be near their jobs and schools, but our city relies on these residents who are also teachers, home healthcare workers, caregivers, and taxi drivers. They run our city. In fact, they are an integral part of the economic engine of the city. They are part of our local economy. They fuel our economy on a daily basis. Mr. Speaker, these folks really represent the economic engine of New York City.

As you will hear from my colleagues, affordable housing—public housing—and its residents are under threat. After a decade of funding reductions, the President's administration made one thing clear: they plan to drastically accelerate funding reductions for HUD. This turns that housing agency, essentially, into an absentee landlord, into a slumlord, if you will, administering public housing developments across the country that are in decrepit and seriously embarrassing conditions.

The administration's fiscal year 2018 budget proposal revealed a \$7.6 billion cut, almost a 20 percent cut to HUD, and a two-thirds cut to public housing capital needs.

Now, New York City has a need of \$17 billion to do point work, roof work, boiler work, and elevator work to improve the quality of life of the residents of these housing developments. Yet the administration has proposed a \$7.6 billion cut. This is a national crisis, an affordable housing national crisis.

We have Members from California to Texas to New York who all believe that affordable housing should be at the forefront of our progressive priority. It is a fundamental cornerstone of the American Dream that we cannot afford to let slip away.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from the State of Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me give my greatest appreciation to the gentleman from New York, who will remain at the podium as he has yielded to me, and to thank him for the leadership that he has given to so many issues.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for the leadership work that he took to Puerto Rico that will need housing, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that will need housing. The neighborhoods that he has just mentioned, I am quite familiar with. I know those neighborhoods in New York. I have relatives in New York.

But I also know the neighborhoods in Texas, and I know the public housing developments. I want to join the gentleman in that terminology because, remember, it used to be the projects. But we know that public housing developments are where people live. It is where they raise their children. When you have a home in the public housing development, it needs maintenance, elevators, window reinforcement, hallways cleaned up, painting done, and, yes, debugging, and brick-by-brick repair, or it may be a new addition.

All of my life, I have met my classmates in public, elementary, and middle school, and they live in the housing developments, many of whom I could go back to, and they are doctors, lawyers, teachers, business persons, and Congresspersons. They are upstanding citizens. But we also know that they have said to us that you have allowed these public housing developments to deteriorate so that children of families who live there now may be subjected to violence and drugs, and it is not their home.

Let me tell you why we are in that predicament.

Right now, as we speak, they are marking up the tax scam. If you look at this pie, you will see that it will be impossible for any moneys to go for public housing or affordable housing because 80 percent of the tax cuts will go to the 1 percent. That means that we will lose \$1.5 trillion in revenue.

What Congressman ESPAILLAT is talking about is that we will be losing and will not be able—as the budget that was passed evidences with \$2.4 trillion in cuts in domestic discretionary spending, it will not allow the work that we are calling for today: reconstruction, new build, rehab, repairs, and adding to the housing stock in America for our people who are in need.

Let me show you this. It may not be exactly in our neighborhood, but it shows you what happened in a disaster. This is a house, or a place where people would be in a house. I could go to Texas after Hurricane Harvey and find houses in this condition. I could go to Port Aransas or Rockport. I can go to Third Ward or northeast Houston.

In our community, Mr. Speaker, we have what we call blue tarps after the

hurricane, and they stay on because people are in houses that they cannot afford to repair. They need affordable housing.

Do you know what? They want to live in historic neighborhoods like Fifth Ward where Barbara Jordan grew up, Sunnyside, South Park, Third Ward, Acres Homes, northeast Houston, and Independence Heights, but they need housing.

So I join the gentleman in saying that this is a travesty. This is a disgrace. We need funding for affordable housing. Hurricane Harvey has made it even more disastrous because there are people in housing now right in my district—and I hear you in northeast Houston where the walls are pulled out and the mold is on because they need affordable housing. They need Section 8 vouchers and clean housing.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about the affordable housing and public housing. I have lost 112 units through Hurricane Harvey in condemnation, and I may lose more out of a total of 201 in one particular two-story area of Clayton Homes; and then 2100 Memorial, we are fighting to not lose the housing that is needed there.

So I want to join and thank the Congressional Progressive Caucus and thank the gentleman for leading this Special Order. I want to make sure that I keep this picture up for America to know that unless we fight against these dastardly cuts, whether you are in a disaster area and have lost your home; or whether you are in a city like New York and are facing the deterioration of public housing, or the elimination of units taken offline; or whether you are in Houston, Texas, under the Houston Housing Authority and you are losing units, the cry is for the families of America.

Who do we care for? Some of them are families of Active-Duty soldiers. Some of them are families of veterans. So I would join the gentleman in crafting and working on stopping the bleeding of losing affordable housing for the many millions of Americans who need it and welcome it, and for the millions of children who deserve it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I thank him again for his leadership.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Texas for her eloquent remarks regarding this pressing need, this national crisis of housing.

Let me just share with you some other numbers that will further ensure that the American people understand in full depth this crisis.

In my district, as I said earlier, there are 75,463 residents of public housing out of 400,000 citywide. There are 34,035 NYCHA families in the district out of 174,283 citywide. Twenty-five percent are children who are subject to mold like you see right here on this easel. Mr. Speaker, mold that contributes to asthma and to other respiratory diseases that then lead to absenteeism in

the schools and long-term problems for young people and children who live in these public housing units.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, 21 percent of the residents of these housing developments are seniors over 62 years old who are also subjected to mold, chipping paint, and elevators that don't work. They have to go up and down 18 or 20 stories. Some of them are in wheelchairs or have some real challenges getting around. Yet the Federal Government and its Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, continue to be an absentee landlord abandoning them to their own fate. Fifty-two percent of those residents, Mr. Speaker, are on fixed incomes, and 46 percent across the city have an employed family member. So these are the numbers that are very telling to this national crisis.

The reduction in capital funding which leads to the deterioration of buildings' roofs and facades, failure of boilers, leaks, mold like we see right here, and other unacceptable conditions are devastating to my constituents, and they contribute to a public health crisis, asthma, respiratory disease.

Americans need a better deal for housing. As we continue negotiations on the fiscal year 2018 appropriations and the administration prepares the fiscal 2019 budget proposal, we need to ensure that public housing is adequately funded.

□ 1800

Sufficient capital funding is imperative for my district and the country, and it ensures the creation of jobs through capital work.

Investing capital dollars in public housing repair would also yield employment in our communities. It also ensures the reduction of negative health outcomes and healthcare costs related to the deterioration of housing conditions. It also results in quality, stable housing for low-income Americans, which is one of the most important factors in the alleviation of poverty.

Americans need a better deal for housing. I hope that my colleagues remember the constituency that we serve, particularly the most vulnerable ones like the residents of public housing, and we continue to fight back against budget cuts. Growing the public housing capital fund must be elevated as a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. GOMEZ).

Mr. GOMEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman ESPAILLAT for leading this important Special Order.

It is no secret that many cities in our country face an affordable housing crisis. That crisis is particularly acute in California, as everyone in my State, from the Bay Area to Los Angeles to the Inland Empire, will tell you.

California is a desired destination for people from all over the world, many of

them skilled, tech-savvy young people who moved to California for our climate, culture, or commerce. This is especially true for my home city of Los Angeles, which boasts cultures and cuisines from all over the globe, allowing anybody to feel at home.

Unfortunately, the growth of affordable housing has not kept pace with the population growth. This disconnect has created a housing affordability crisis that is exacerbating economic inequality and forcing lifelong Angelinos out of neighborhoods they grew up in.

The lack of housing raises rents on working families, which, in turn, threatens the vibrant hubs of Latino, Black, and Asian culture throughout my district, potentially stripping these neighborhoods of their character that made them so unique and desirable to live in in the first place.

Our affordable housing crisis has left more than 400,000 households in the city of Los Angeles and 900,00 in L.A. County in what they call a precarious housing situation. A precarious housing situation means that the dwelling is substandard, families are doubled up, or they spend more than half their income on housing.

That is 1.3 million people in precarious housing situations, teetering on the edge of homelessness, one bad day away from losing the roof over their head. That is on top of 58,000 homeless individuals in Los Angeles County.

Simply put, the affordability crisis in California threatens our State's great legacy to provide economic opportunity for all.

In Los Angeles, we have seen that, when we target our resources to help specific populations, we get results and we save lives. In 2015, L.A. City housed more than 15,000 people, including 2,600 veterans and 2,800 chronically homeless people, more than any other city in the country.

Despite the historic housing shortage and a staggering mental health crisis, my city has proven that policymakers can tackle this problem if we have a coordinated effort at the State, local, and Federal levels.

L.A. is stepping up. So is the State of California. L.A. passed measure HHH, which is \$1.2 billion to help individuals who are homeless. The California State Legislature passed 15 housing bills and a \$4 billion bond to be on the ballot in 2018.

But we can't do it on our own, and we don't need the Federal Government to undermine our efforts by undermining their role and responsibility at the Federal level. Unfortunately, our Republican-led Federal Government doesn't believe in being a good partner and doesn't believe in combating unaffordable housing and homelessness. They have chosen to starve vital agencies like Housing and Urban Development and zero out funding for agencies such as the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Cities like L.A. and States like California need responsible Federal part-

ners to tackle issues like homelessness so they can make tough choices and make sure we have a housing situation that serves all people. That starts with actual Federal investment in projects and programs that help people, not just the rich. That is why the Republican tax cut plan is such a sham and deserves to go back to whatever dark corner of Republican dogma it came from.

As it stands right now, the Republican tax plan would cut the production of affordable housing in half by eliminating multifamily, tax-exempt housing bonds. It would also repeal the 4 percent tax credit and provisions authorizing the use of tax-exempt private activity bonds. Taken together, these provisions account for 50 percent of all affordable housing production and would make our affordable housing crisis even worse.

Republicans in Congress only claim to care about giving States the power to pursue their own policies. It would be great if their actions matched their words and they actually worked with our great cities and States to address important problems instead of making them worse.

I ask for all of you to consider that any tax plan not exacerbate the housing crisis in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative ESPAILLAT for leading this important Special Order.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, earlier, I talked about some of the proposed budget cuts that HUD has brought forward for this fiscal year. Let me tell you, the American people, what some of the programs are that will be negatively, adversely affected by these cuts on a daily basis.

Section 8, a program that provides rental assistance to help low-income individuals and families, more than 125,000 households in New York City's NYCHA complexes depend on Section 8 vouchers, 39,000 of which are administered by the city's HPD Department. Approximately half of the voucher recipients are elderly and disabled.

Community Development Block Grants help the city enforce housing quality standards. More than half of the city's Community Development Block Grant allocations support housing quality standards funding; 500,000 inspections have been conducted, 8,000 emergency repairs, 16,000 housing litigation cases, and emergency shelters for 1,000 households, just in 2016.

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit, nationally, 90 percent of the affordable housing is financed through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit and tax-exempt bonds have helped create and preserve over 116,000 safe, quality, affordable homes in New York City.

These programs will be compromised and lead to apartments with mold, chipping paint, leaky pipes, dysfunctioning elevators, failing boilers, and leaky roofs. So this is a major national crisis.

Let me share with you some of my constituents' stories. Now that we have

talked about numbers, let's talk about what these numbers mean and who they impact.

Let's talk about, for example, a lady named Maria Pacheco, who has lived in the UPACA 6 development for 12 years. She is retired from working at the stock market. This is what she had to say about the importance of making capital improvements to her public housing building:

If NYCHA fixes the entrance doors and the walkway in front of the development, more seniors would be able to get out of their apartments more often. There are a number of seniors who do not come out of their apartments because they are not able to open the entrance doors. Those doors are really heavy and the walkway is dangerous, and a lot of seniors fear they will fall.

Maria Pacheco needs a better deal in housing from Congress. Seniors are too afraid that they will fall.

During Secretary Ben Carson's listening tour—by the way, Mr. Secretary, New York City is still waiting for you to see our public housing complexes and the conditions that they are in—during his so-called listening tour, this is what he had to say to a development in Columbus, Ohio, that is partially funded by HUD: "Compassion means not giving people a comfortable setting that would make somebody want to say: 'I'll just stay here. They will take care of me.'"

Mr. Secretary, "a comfortable setting," you said. Public housing often lacks consistent heat and hot water. That is far from being comfortable.

Public housing elevators often break down. That is far from being comfortable.

Public housing often has no heat and hot water and mold on the wall. That is far from being comfortable.

I think my constituent Birdie Glen, age 78, who lives in the Jackie Robinson Development with her husband and great-grandson would disagree with you, Mr. Secretary. She is retired from the Department of Education, and this is what she had to say:

If they fix the boilers in the Jackie Robinson Development, the residents would be more grateful and appreciative. The lack of consistent heat and hot water has caused a lot of the residents to get sick. Adults as well as children have been visiting the doctor's office more frequently due to getting sick because of no heat and hot water.

This has become a public health crisis as well. During the winter months, residents experience more illnesses in the Jackie Robinson complexes because the boilers need to be replaced.

Another resident, Felicia Rodriguez, 70 years old, who lives in the Gaylord Houses, says:

In my 2 years living at Gaylord, I have experienced severe flooding, water damages in different areas of my apartment. If we had repairs and upgrades in our development, we will value our homes and neighborhood. We need to ensure we get the repairs completed in a timely manner to avoid further damages to our infrastructure.

Gaylord has significant leaks due to the pipe damage, brick gaps, roof damage. These problems affect our health, our hygiene, and

economic issues for many seniors in Gaylord development. By making major roof and brick repairs at Gaylord White Houses, we will eliminate leaks, flooding, and damage to the top floors of these apartments.

This is a public health crisis.

Let's talk, Mr. Speaker, about public health and mold.

In every city, there is an aging public housing development complex, and a lack of investment for decades means that many buildings pose great, great health risks to the residents. In New York City, a majority of NYCHA buildings are more than 60 years old. Public housing authorities have endured decades of Federal disinvestment. For many, a lack of affordable funds means that repairs have spiraled out of control. Some units are so damaged that they cannot be lived in.

Citywide, there are 2,300 NYCHA units that are vacant, and many need extensive renovations to become safe homes again. Not only is the lack of Federal investment hurting the number of public housing units available, but vacant units almost always make public housing less safe for current residents.

Speaking to DNAinfo, Jisele Hearne elaborates how vacant units make the Harlem River Houses less safe: "Of course, we are worried. Anyone can come in and you don't know what they are going to do. They can . . . leave the gas on. It's not safe living someplace where nobody is monitoring."

Harlem River Houses has been plagued with mold for many years, and units on the top floors have remained uninhabited.

Mold affects 328 NYCHA properties, and the situation has only worsened after Hurricane Sandy. That was in 2012. We need capital investment not just to eradicate the appearance of mold; we need to address the root cause of that. We need to replace leaky roofs, crumbling pipes, and all ventilation systems to make sure the mold is gone forever, for good.

□ 1815

The health of children, families, and seniors is at stake. The CDC reports that exposure to mold can lead to coughing, wheezing, eye and skin irritation in otherwise healthy people.

For small children, exposure to mold may lead to asthma, leading to absenteeism in the schools. For vulnerable residents, such as seniors or small children, mold may lead to much more serious medical conditions.

The government is the landlord of public housing complexes across the country, and we cannot expect public housing residents to deal with conditions that would be deemed unacceptable in the private market. It is our solemn duty to make sure that public housing residents have homes that allow them to lead healthy and productive lives.

If we can afford to spend \$1.75 million remodeling one unit in public housing—that is the White House that I am

referring to, which is public housing. If we could spend \$1.75 million to renovate the most expensive public housing unit, the White House, then surely, Mr. President, we can afford to guarantee safe homes for public housing residents.

If President Trump can spend \$291,000 on office walls, then America's 1.16 million units of public housing should have walls free of mold, like the one we see right here, and other safety hazards. Unlike the White House, residents of public housing cannot afford lavish renovations. They depend on us, and we must not fail them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), my distinguished colleague.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Congressman ESPAILLAT for yielding and for his tremendous leadership and advocacy to ensure that our communities have access to affordable housing, regardless of their income, regardless of their background. I want to thank the Congressional Progressive Caucus and him for leading this Special Order tonight because it is so important that the public really understand the issues that we are dealing with here in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the American people.

Tonight, of course, we are calling on the Trump administration and our colleagues across the aisle for greater investments in affordable housing, including in public housing.

Affordable housing should be a basic right. No one should have to choose between placing food on the table or paying their rent, especially not in the wealthiest country on Earth. Sadly, right now, our country is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. Half of all families in this country are forced to spend more than 30 percent of their hard-earned income on housing.

Over 38 million families struggle to pay rent and put food on the table every day because they pay more than one-third of their income on housing. Right now there are only 12 counties in the entire country where a minimum-wage worker is able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

Simply put, the housing crisis in America has reached epidemic proportions. It is really a state of emergency. Nowhere is this epidemic more evident than, for example, in my own district. The average renter in Oakland, California, for example, would be forced to spend a staggering 70 percent of their income on housing if they were to move today—70 percent—and many are being forced out.

In Oakland, the number of homeless individuals increased by 25 percent this year to more than 2,700 people. In all of my county, Alameda County, the homelessness population has increased by nearly 40 percent in the last 2 years to more than 5,600 people.

Now, these people have settled into encampments with all of their furniture and belongings across the streets of cities in my district. It is un-

conscionable and devastating that this un-American reality persists across the country.

Yet, instead of working to address this crisis, Republicans have slashed funding, mind you, for housing assistance programs to their lowest level in 40 years. In the Republican fiscal year 2018 budget, there are over \$200 billion in cuts from programs that everyday families depend on, like SNAP, agricultural subsidies, and housing assistance.

What is worse, the Trump budget slashes the budget of the Department of Housing and Urban Development by nearly 15 percent. The Secretary of HUD, I guess, supports this, which is mind-boggling because he is charged with developing housing strategies so that everyone can have decent, affordable housing. To cut it by 15 percent makes no sense.

This endangers the livelihoods of millions of low-income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, veterans, low-wage workers, families living with HIV and AIDS, which they all depend on affordable housing programs.

Our Progressive Caucus colleagues and I are here tonight to say that, really, enough is enough. We demand affordable housing for every person in our Nation, regardless of who they are and where they live, and we are not giving up.

Earlier this year, I introduced a renters' bill of rights. It is H. Con. Res. 74, which affirms that all renters have the right to safe, decent, and affordable housing. It calls for greater enforcement of antidiscrimination laws that protect communities of color from burdensome regulations. It calls on Congress to increase funding to protect every American's right to livable and affordable housing.

So as a member of the Appropriations and Budget Committees, I am committed to advancing the American Dream for all, and that is affordable housing. People deserve to have a decent and safe place to live to raise their families.

So to everyone across the country who worry about paying rent or whether they can finally, at the end of the day, buy a home, I say: Keep raising your voices and keep bringing what we call street heat to defend your communities, because you have got allies in the Congressional Progressive Caucus. You have got them in this House of Representatives, especially Democrats. We are not going to give up fighting for you.

I want to thank Congressman ESPAILLAT for holding this Special Order tonight because I think the public, given this crisis—and it is a crisis, it is an epidemic, it is an emergency—people need to know we are here fighting for them, and we are going to continue fighting until everyone in America has a decent, safe, and affordable place to live.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from

the State of California for her eloquent words.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight another factor that contributes to the problem of the lack of affordable housing, and that is the decreasing affordability crisis in New York City.

Historically, New York City was built on inclusivity, and it is here that people from all walks of life come in and they coexist. It is this diversity that contributes to the success of this great experiment called America, this great experiment called New York City. It is young people moving here from Tennessee and immigrant families from the Dominican Republic, like my family, for their own American Dream right here in New York City. And New York City's success is one piece of the national picture of urbanization.

This enormous change in cities across the country includes an influx of more people, often young and from diverse backgrounds. This means we need the visionaries in expanding our housing supply, especially our affordable housing supply.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we are here today, to highlight on this national crisis of a lack of affordable housing. America has a housing crisis—an affordable housing crisis. Working and middle class New Yorkers have felt the brunt of fewer options available on the market.

Countless middle- and low-income families cannot afford to live in the neighborhoods they have known their entire lives. They must give up living close to jobs, schools, familiar neighbors, and everything else that defines their community.

The very foundation of our city is threatened when households must make difficult choices between basic necessities and rent. That is truly a fight for the soul of our neighborhoods, our cities; and they are often forced to leave these houses and communities.

This is not a crisis that affects only a few. It impacts many New Yorkers. Sixty-nine percent of New Yorkers rent their homes, and nearly half of renters struggle to pay rent every month. Many are one unexpected bill away from debt or eviction.

While this situation is dire for those struggling to pay rent in their apartments now, there are virtually no options for low-income New Yorkers. Minimum-wage workers will need to have three full-time jobs or work at least 119 hours per week to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment at market rate.

Not only is it physically impossible, but we should not ask that of workers in our city. The crisis of affordability nationwide will not vanish if ignored. So long as New York's economy is thriving, rents won't plateau or fall on their own. Developers will continue to eye aging buildings for redevelopment and build new luxury apartments. Rather than leave the creation and preservation of affordable housing up

to chance or whims of the market, we must be intentional about funding affordable housing.

We already have a housing stock of 176,000 units of public housing in New York City alone. That is the lifeline of hundreds of thousands of residents, but it is in dire need of investment.

If we care about diversity and care about inclusion, we must put our money where our mouth is and we must repair and preserve public housing for a future of increasingly expensive cities.

Another aspect of the lack of affordable housing and the income gaps affecting New York City is the dynamic of gentrification. Mr. Speaker, I have the distinct honor of representing Harlem, which recently was—there was an attempt to change its name to SoHa by speculators, people who want to turn Harlem, a traditional iconic neighborhood of New York City, into something else.

There are Harlems in every State across the country. There are Harlems in every country around the world. Harlem is a personality. It is an attitude. Harlem is for those who feel that perhaps they don't have a voice but they want to fight to get to another level. That is Harlem. It is a spirit.

Harlem, which, during the latter half of the 20th century, was plagued with crime and abandonment, is now falling victim to its own success. Rents have risen and many long-term residents have been displaced.

The same is happening in Washington Heights, Inwood. Neighborhoods that saw over 100 homicides every year and that now are down to low single digits are seeing a dramatic increase in rent and affordability; and many folks who have been living there for decades, like my family, are now having to make tough choices of whether they remain in the neighborhood that they love or have to move somewhere else.

Even among those who remain, they still face additional challenges because the neighborhood they have known for so many years now feels unfamiliar. For many, the fear of displacement is ever-present.

Mrs. Gwen Walker, a resident of the General Grant Houses in Morningside Heights since the 1950s, was speaking to *The New York Times* when she shared her thoughts on displacement, saying the following: "But the feeling is, 'What am I going to do? Where are we going to go?'"

Gentrification was a frequent topic of conversation among Mrs. Walker and her neighbors.

So I continue to highlight the fact that not only do we have a public housing crisis, not only does that lead to a public health crisis, but also the skyrocketing cost of living has created gentrification, has made it very difficult for working people—the engine of the economy of the city—to make ends meet.

These residents are worth protecting, and low-income New Yorkers should

not be pushed aside every time a speculator or developer thinks that a building, a block, or a neighborhood could be worth more money.

For neighborhoods that have already gentrified, public housing is the only standing thing between them and displacement. They are the lifeline for many tenants, and unlike market rate housing, they will not raise rent on their residents when the neighborhood improves.

This is paramount. This is paramount for many low- and fixed-income New Yorkers because they are not further burdened for not abandoning their homes.

□ 1830

And the displacement continues to occur in New York City, Madam Speaker. It is a harsh reality after tenants on the private market are evicted, bought out, or cannot afford a rent increase. After losing their home, families have few choices. Some families end up in overcrowded apartments, if they are lucky, living with another family member or living with a stranger.

David, who is a Mexican immigrant, lives in Washington Heights. He lives with 12 other people in a 750-square-foot section of the basement. Another 14 people live in the other half.

He explained, speaking to *New York Magazine*, that, for \$100 each, they get 40 square feet, a children's bunk bed, and a refrigerator salvaged from the trash. Their basement is hard to move around in and impossible to walk anywhere but to the leaking bathroom down the cramped hall or to the small living room with the scavenged sofa. The basement costs David and his 27 roommates almost \$3,000 a month.

This is not an uncommon experience. Citywide, two-thirds of all Mexicans live in overcrowded conditions. David described his journey and realization of what living in New York City would be like for him:

From the airport, I went to my brother's place in Washington Heights. He was living with his child and pregnant wife, along with another couple and their kid—six people. I was the seventh. In only one room.

America should know this: there is a public housing and affordable housing crisis across the country, and HUD proposes to dramatically cut the programs that guarantee the services for this housing.

David also experienced the loss of his home and an understanding that his place in the city is always vulnerable.

This is all happening, Madam Speaker, while Republicans continue to devise, to plan, premeditatedly, to plan their tax reform that will give the rich, the 1 percent, a handsome tax cut while punishing the middle class and working class sectors of America.

There is only one unit of public housing that is worth over \$390 million, Madam Speaker, and it is the White House. The White House does not have mold. The White House does not have crumbling pipes. The White House does

not have severe water damage or asbestos because the White House is not plagued by disinvestment.

President Trump does not pay rent, and he is not in danger of being priced out of his neighborhood. And yet President Trump and congressional Republicans are proposing to strip cities of their ability to create and maintain affordable housing for those who most desperately need it.

The Ryan-McConnell tax bill is a lie that is being sold to the American people as a promise, a promise that claims that everyday Americans will benefit and see more dollars in their pockets. But it is a scam; it is a shell game; and it will make richer the rich and leave everybody else behind.

The proposed tax plan eliminates funding for low-income housing tax credits, which are responsible for many affordable developments. The need for affordable housing is ever growing, and the low-income housing tax credit must be expanded, not eliminated, to keep up with demand. For New Yorkers, every dollar in their paycheck matters when it comes to being able to pay rent.

Removing the State and local tax deduction, called SALT, places an unfair double tax on State residents. States who choose to provide high-quality services through taxation will be unfairly punished. This unjust punishment will be felt mostly by those who live paycheck to paycheck.

In some neighborhoods in New York City, residents spend as much as 80 percent of their income on housing and transportation. Removing the State and local tax deduction means that families who already make tough decisions about food, rent, and other bills now have fewer dollars in their pockets to make those decisions.

For families that have saved up enough to participate in the American Dream of owning their home, they no longer will be able to use the mortgage interest tax deduction to help them finance their homes. For many hopeful families, eliminating the mortgage interest tax deduction closes the door to that opportunity.

The low-income housing tax credit, the State and local tax deduction, and the mortgage interest tax deduction are the foundation from which we can build affordable communities. We will not give in to the GOP tax scam; we will not play in a shell game; and we will not give billionaires even one more dollar. America deserves a better deal.

Madam Speaker, I close by saying that, in my home State of New York, the Empire State, and particularly in my district, for the last 75 years, it has been represented by two giants: first, by the late and great Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who made history right here in these Chambers; and for the last 46 years, by the "Lion of Lenox Avenue," Charles B. Rangel.

Underfunding of affordable housing in that district starves public housing and is compromising the health of pub-

lic housing residents. HUD's capital backlog of \$26 billion cannot be added to. We must be responsible and take hold of this challenge.

For the public health of our constituents, to preserve the American Dream, I urge my colleagues to vote and make affordable housing a priority.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. TENNEY). Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

FOOD SECURITY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today as the vice chair of the House Agriculture Committee and chair of the House Agriculture Nutrition Subcommittee.

We are currently working on a farm bill, and the farm bill has legislative policy that really has multiple purposes. One is to make sure that Americans have food security, they have access to affordable, high-quality, and safe food. Also, though, it is just as much about making sure that we have a vibrant, rural economy, Madam Speaker.

Within the farm bill, there is the nutrition title. Tonight, I want to spend some time talking about the nutrition title and the importance of that nutrition title. Obviously, nutrition matters. We know the health benefits from getting access to nutritional food.

Madam Speaker, there is kind of a value I grew up with growing up in a rural community. Madam Speaker, I say that one of the worst parts about growing up in a small, rural community is, quite frankly, everybody knew your business. If you did something wrong, before you got home, Mom and Dad probably already heard about it. Now, I have to say that was the worst part.

The best part about growing up in a rural community is that everybody knew your business. And when a family had a need, whether there was a crisis of any type, an emergency, neighbors stepped forward. Neighbors helped neighbors. They stepped forward, whether it was support, love, financial support, food, physical assistance, whatever that might be.

And, for me, that principle, that value of neighbor helping neighbor is really what the nutrition title of the farm bill is all about. And the most appropriate place for the nutrition title and our nutrition programs is in the farm bill because, after all, there is not a calorie that is consumed within the nutrition programs that is not raised by a farm family someplace.

So this evening, we really want to take some time and zero in on what we call D-SNAP within the nutrition title. SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Madam Speaker.

At one time, it was called food stamps. That was many years ago. That still gets tossed around. But it is really the SNAP benefits today. It is supplemental. It is assistance that comes after an individual or a family, whatever resources they put towards their own foods needs. Obviously, it is what their family can assist them with and it is what their community can assist them with, whether that is their church or another civic organization or, perhaps, a food bank.

We also have nutritional programs called TEFAP that provide food and food commodities to our food banks as well. That can be the subject of another evening to talk about.

Tonight, we want to talk about D-SNAP. Those are specific benefits that come at times of disaster.

We know that our country has been really overwhelmed with disasters. We have seen, obviously, hurricanes in the Texas and Louisiana area. We have seen hurricanes in the Florida and Georgia area. We have seen multiple hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We have seen wildfires that have taken homes and lives, dramatic wildfires, intense wildfires, burning entire neighborhoods and communities in both California and Oregon, specifically.

So, this evening, I want to spend a little bit of time talking about those D-SNAP disaster programs. I am very proud about the programs that are authorized through the House Agriculture Committee, through the farm bill, through our work.

We are working on a farm bill right now. This next one expires in October of next year, 2018. But because of the rural economy, we feel it is very important that we do that ahead of time, and we are hoping to accomplish that soon, in the months to come. We will see how that works out.

We have got a lot of work to continue to do on it, but that is our goal. The rural farm economy, farm income, has been down by 50 percent for a number of years, so this would be a really positive thing for rural America to be able to accomplish this farm bill.

So tonight we want to talk a little bit about, specifically, food assistance for disaster relief, otherwise referred to as D-SNAP.

Madam Speaker, there is nothing more important than providing food