

I heard from constituent after constituent about the negative repercussions of the shutdown.

I heard from store owners who couldn't accept EBT cards because their SNAP vendor license expired with no possibility of renewal.

I heard from Federal employees, more than 4,200 of whom I am proud to represent in Congress, who worried about losing their dental and vision insurance.

I met with members of the U.S. Coast Guard, the only military personnel who went without pay during the shutdown.

And I heard from small business owners, more than 27,000 of whom live in my district, about the effect of the shutdown on their bottom lines.

All of this for what purpose?

From day one, I joined any colleagues in vote after vote to reopen the government on a bipartisan basis.

It is incumbent on Congress to ensure that the government remains open when the current spending package expires on February 15.

The border wall is a monument to division that, according to experts, is ineffective and wasteful. Holding the government hostage over it was wrong. Indeed, not a single Member of the House body—Democrat or Republican—representing a border district is for the construction of a wall.

When discussing the need for improved border security, we must move past fear-driven partisan politics which seek only to divide us and paralyze our democracy. Moreover, we cannot allow ourselves to fall short of our constitutional obligation as Members of Congress.

Let us not forget that our Founding Fathers began with the legislative body in Article I of our Constitution. This is the one body that represents the will of the people, legislatively.

Our work should not be contingent upon the whims and desires of another branch of government meant to only execute the laws our body is obliged to legislate. This is not how to preserve a democratic order anchored in the separation of powers and sustained by healthy checks and balances.

To be clear, now is not the time to run away from our responsibility as a coequal branch of government. Democrats and Republicans, alike, need to come together and have an evidence-based and transparent debate on the question of border security, have a vote, and then send legislation to the President. It shouldn't take a costly shutdown and a threat of another looming one in order to accomplish this.

As Members of both parties from both Houses begin budget negotiations in a conference committee, I ask that they remember the hardships endured in recent weeks not only by the Federal employees who went without pay in upstate New York, but also by business owners, farmers, and so many others in our region who were harmed because of ripple effects of the shutdown.

The government must not close again. My district and our country can't afford another shutdown. It is our collective responsibility to ensure we do not find ourselves on February 15 at the start of yet another shutdown.

In short, I urge this body to do as envisioned by our Founding Fathers, get to work, and do our job.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF COLONEL PETER NEZAMIS

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colonel Peter Nezamis of Belleville.

It was recently announced that Colonel Nezamis will be promoted to brigadier general and will lead the Illinois Air National Guard, where he will lead over 3,000 personnel.

He commanded the Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing at Scott Air Force Base, which received the Outstanding Unit Award, under his guidance.

Colonel Nezamis has commanded numerous expeditionary operations and flew over 275 combat and combat support hours. He first joined the Air National Guard in 1986 and has served our State and Nation over 30 years.

Colonel Nezamis, we know you will serve the State and Nation to the best of your ability, and congratulations in your new role.

#### ENHANCING AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITARY VETERANS

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to bring awareness about a coming crisis in our Nation's agricultural workforce.

According to USDA, the average age for a farmer is now 58 and has been on the rise for over 30 years. Our Nation faces a shortfall of 700,000 agricultural workers over the next 20 years.

How can we reverse this trend? According to the Department of Labor, 45 percent of armed servicemembers are from rural America. Many of our returning heroes struggle to find employment after serving our Nation.

Agriculture is a sensible solution to fill the economic gap our veterans face. That is why I joined with my friend and colleague on the House Agriculture Committee, AL LAWSON of Florida, to introduce the Vets to Ag Act. Our bill streamlines the process for veterans getting apprenticeships in the agricultural industry.

Despite dysfunction in Washington, we are still fighting for bipartisan, commonsense solutions to help our farmers and our veterans. I encourage my colleagues to support this bipartisan effort.

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today in recognition of Human Trafficking and Prevention Month.

Human trafficking cases are on the rise nationwide. As the grandfather of 11 grandchildren, I am angry about

that. My appreciation goes out to members of law enforcement who are on the front lines combating these crimes and making our communities safer.

Programs like the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign help combat human trafficking. The program works to make sure, if trafficking victims are taken over the border, they are rescued or have a resource that they can turn to for help.

These are important steps, but there is still so much more work remaining. Both parties must work together to do our part in wiping out this evil before it does any more harm.

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#### STUDENT LOAN DEBT

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

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Transparency in Student Lending Act.

College education can be a life-changing investment, but it can come at a tremendous cost. Right now, 44 million Americans collectively hold \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt. The Federal Government lends 90 percent of these dollars. However, unlike other lenders, the Federal Government does not provide students with complete information about the total cost of their loan, leaving borrowers unaware of hidden costs and fees until they enter the repayment phase. I have introduced this bill to require complete information to be provided to students before they take out a loan.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the youngest congressional district in the United States, and many of my constituents are struggling with student debt. With this legislation, we can help young people make fully informed financial decisions for their families and their futures.

#### VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to call on all of those who support freedom and democracy to stand with the long-suffering people of Venezuela. We have finally reached the tipping point where freedom for the Venezuelan people hangs in the balance.

On Friday, President Trump recognized the duly elected leader of the National Assembly, Juan Guaido, as the constitutional interim President of Venezuela. Shortly afterward the vast majority of Western Hemisphere nations affirmed their recognition of the Guaido government.

On January 10 the OAS passed a resolution, Mr. Speaker, that refused to recognize the illegitimate Maduro regime, and OAS Secretary-General Luis