

I am deeply grateful for their work to empower our Federal workforce: our air traffic controllers, veteran healthcare practitioners, Social Security benefit experts, and so many more who provide the services and assistance hardworking families in our communities deserve and need.

Their ability to continue doing so is under immense threat. Union leaders on the front lines painted a picture in which our Federal workers are living in fear of wrongful firings, receiving intimidating emails that are causing mass confusion, and receiving unclear directives from an administration that has no interest in the rule of law.

These are workers who have dedicated their lives to public service. They help our parents and grandparents receive the Social Security that they have earned and rely on. They deliver world-class care to our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms. They keep our borders secure, our air and water clean, our airports and skies safe, and so much more. They deserve our gratitude, not to be subjected to this demeaning and cruel treatment, especially as they continue to deliver for hardworking families amid all of it.

Mr. Speaker, I have also spoken to constituents who have been impacted by these wrongful cuts. A young man named Jeff Plummer spoke to me hours before being wrongfully fired from the Internal Revenue Service. Jeff received exemplary reviews of his work within the IRS Small Business/Self-Employed Division, which helps small businesses to comply with tax requirements, helping our regional economy to thrive.

Due to the simple fact that he had worked for the IRS for less than 1 year, he was terminated. He is among 6,000 IRS employees who have been wrongfully fired, all in the middle of tax season.

Jeff and his fellow IRS employees are not alone. Our veterans are being directly harmed and discriminated against. They are experiencing real harm as the services they rely on are being decimated.

Service-disabled veterans are among the 8,500 Federal employees in my district alone being attacked and dismissed for being DEI hires. I spoke with one disabled veteran who bled for our country and continued to serve as a Federal employee for nearly two decades. He received a title change in the last year, which automatically put him on probationary status. He was fired last week with absolutely no justification.

These veterans feel demeaned and betrayed. It is unthinkable and shameful to treat our military heroes this way. It violates the sacred honor that we have to care for our veterans and provide the services and benefits that they have earned and that they deserve.

I have spoken to constituents myself. I have heard the palpable fear and anxiety that our Federal workers are feel-

ing, which makes it impossible to deliver the best quality care and services for taxpayers, from caring for veterans and seniors to protecting our environment.

As egg prices are skyrocketing due to bird flu ravaging our farms, Trump and Musk have cut FDA and USDA employees, putting the health and well-being of our communities on the line.

After we saw the first commercial airline crash in 16 years, there are FAA employees who are being fired. Their message each time: These employees weren't mission critical. Don't worry. You won't miss them.

Tell that to the senior whose medicine is contaminated due to the lack of oversight, or to the airline passenger facing major delays because of a severe shortage of air traffic controllers.

Meanwhile, unelected billionaire Elon Musk is celebrating on the world stage with a chain saw in his hand, bragging about the degrading treatment of our public servants, with no regard for the taxpayers who will suffer as a result because they cannot get the services that they rely on.

Why wouldn't he celebrate? President Trump has illegally given him the keys to our Treasury, sensitive government data, and control of our Federal workforce. We won't let him take a chain saw to our Federal workforce without a fight. That is why we are speaking up and speaking out and holding those accountable. We ask our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join in our fight.

BAN ON ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS FROM LOBBYISTS

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

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Speaker, President Trump campaigned around the country to drain the swamp. Yet, one of the first things he did was to reverse President Biden's executive order that banned White House officials from accepting gifts from lobbyists.

Today, I am introducing the Drain the Swamp Act. It is pretty simple. It will ban any White House official from accepting gifts from lobbyists, and it will ban White House officials from becoming lobbyists during the Trump term.

I believe that this bill will have support not just from progressives, not just from Independents, but from the MAGA movement. That is why I am calling on my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to pass the Drain the Swamp Act and send it to President Trump's desk so that he can fulfill his promise.

DEPRIVATION OF MEDICARE TELEHEALTH SERVICES

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Speaker, the Trump administration is stripping millions of American seniors of their coverage of telehealth on March 31. That is right. Starting March 31, doctors' visits via videoconference or Zoom or

phone will no longer be covered for seniors on Medicare.

This is going to impact over 12 million Americans, and the crazy thing is that the inspectors general have found that there is only 0.2 percent of fraud in telehealth. Why are we taking telehealth away from millions of seniors who are homebound or who have difficulty leaving their homes? It is most devastating for rural Americans.

That is why I am introducing today the Telehealth Coverage Act. It will require Medicare to pay for telehealth services. Let us pass this act in a bipartisan way so that millions of American seniors aren't deprived of telehealth services because of the actions of the Trump administration.

CONGRATULATING JERRY GACHETT ON HIS RETIREMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. SYKES) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of a dedicated and true public servant, Detective Jerry Gachett, who is retiring from the Akron Police Department.

I am honored to be standing here today talking about a man who has served the Akron community so humbly for over 31 years and who I am proud to call a friend.

Jerry was born in Alabama and raised in Akron, where he graduated from the John R. Buchtell High School in 1985. He then bravely served this country in the United States Army for 4 years.

For the last 31 years, Jerry has served our community as a member of the Akron Police Department. He has worked as a hostage negotiator. He worked in the financial crimes unit. Jerry also worked for 21 years as a juvenile detective, where he investigated crimes against children.

Throughout his distinguished career, Detective Gachett has played a pivotal role of securing justice with his investigations, leading to the imprisonment of hundreds of child predators, solidifying his reputation as a champion for the community's most vulnerable.

Jerry is one of the most caring and compassionate people I know. In fact, throughout his career, he has taken the care to truly get to know the victims and survivors who he has been sworn to protect and serve.

He has been to countless basketball games, baby showers and more, to celebrate the survivors who he cares so deeply for. He even walked one of the people he supported down the aisle at her wedding. In fact, my husband and I met Jerry when we hired him to secure our wedding when MAGA protesters threatened our very precious and sacred event.

Jerry has always put the people of our community first, and his deep desire to serve his community is an inspiration to all who have had the opportunity to experience his passion for

protecting our community's most vulnerable.

In addition to his law enforcement career, Detective Gachett is an ordained minister and a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. He is also a loving husband, father, and grandfather.

No one deserves retirement more than Jerry, but I know that he won't be retiring for real, as he has been sworn into the APD Reserves. I am sure we will continue to see him serving our community in his own special way.

On behalf of Ohio's 13th Congressional District, I congratulate and thank Detective Jerry Gachett on a storied career at the Akron Police Department and for over 31 years of outstanding service and devotion to our community and our country.

CELEBRATING EVA AND HERB PORTER AS COMMUNITY PILLARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as we celebrate Black History Month to uplift two of my constituents and pillars of the Hanover Park community, Eva and Herb Porter. Both have shared more than 40 years of love, leadership, and unwavering dedication to civic engagement.

Eva Porter is a beloved retired educator in our community. After 30 years of teaching, she has continued to shape young minds in and beyond the classroom.

Eva has served as a trustee of the Poplar Creek Library Board and as a board member for school district U-46. Her passion for service shines through her volunteer work with organizations like Kids Hope USA and the American Cancer Society.

Eva's passion and commitment to public service is matched only by her dear husband, Herb. Currently serving as a deputy mayor of Hanover Park, Herb Porter became the first-ever African-American Hanover Park trustee when he was elected in 2019. With nearly a decade of elected office, Herb is currently the longest serving African-American public official in the northwest suburban area.

He continues to serve his community in his roles on the governing board for the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County as well as the board of the Alignment Collaborative for Education.

□ 1045

Proud members of the DuPage NAACP, Eva and Herb Porter's legacy of service and uplifting diversity and equity have inspired countless community members to get involved in civic engagement, including their daughter, Dr. Chantelle Porter, who was just elected in 2022 as the first Black female judge in DuPage County.

While we think of being first and only, we know we still have a long way

to go to truly have parity and representation across this country, but the Porter family's extensive service to the Hanover Park community is a reminder of just how seriously our local communities take our responsibility to serve our neighbors and to do so with compassion and care.

Today, I rise to speak of their leadership, dedication, and exemplary service, which serves as a reminder to each of us here in Congress that we also have the very same responsibility to care for our neighbors and our working families, not special interests and unaccountable billionaires.

As we take the time to celebrate history, we are also reminded that we are making history every single day in these Chambers and back home in our districts. Let it be good history. Let it be history that we are proud of.

Our constituents, including Herb and Eva, are meeting this moment with the urgency it deserves, and they rightfully expect us to follow their lead. I know I will.

On behalf of Illinois' Third Congressional District on this 25th day of February, 2025, I commend Eva and Herb Porter for their lifelong commitment to modeling civic responsibility, community service, and courageous leadership.

Congratulations to Eva and Herb.

PROTECTING VETERANS IS NOT GOVERNMENT WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. HERNÁNDEZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HERNÁNDEZ. Mr. Speaker, during the past weeks, the Federal Government has been cruel to its workforce. It has offered deferred resignations. It has laid off employees. It has sent employees confusing information.

As Jorge Santiago-Rivera, a labor leader from the Department of Veterans Affairs on the island, has said: The truth is that, yes, we live under fear. We live under uncertainty.

I worry about the well-being of our Federal workers. I worry, in particular, about the well-being of the 13,000 Federal employees who reside in Puerto Rico, but I also worry about the thousands of veterans who rely on the VA for their healthcare needs in Puerto Rico. Why? Because the lack of structure and logic behind these cuts directly affects them.

As Mr. Santiago asks: If you lose 10 emergency workers from the ER, who helps the patients?

Unsurprisingly, the VA is now scrambling to deny deferred resignation requests. In the past, it has had to rehire workers that it laid off.

The VA is not the only Federal agency on the island affected by this chaotic, irresponsible, negligent program of Federal cuts. The IRS reportedly laid off around 200 workers. The National Park Service, the USDA, and the national Forest Service are also laying off employees.

Brenda Reyes Tomassini, a labor leader from the EPA, another agency affected, described it best: It is devastating, truly, a brutal level of anxiety.

What makes this even worse is the process. Some of these employees have worked for the Federal Government for 15 or 20 years. They transferred to new positions, so they appeared as if they were on probation and have been terminated. That is unacceptable.

Members of this Congress have not received accurate information about what is happening. I will be the first one to acknowledge that government waste exists. It exists at the Federal level, the State level, and the municipal level, but protecting our veterans is not government waste. Protecting our national parks and protecting our national forests, like El Yunque, is not government waste. Protecting the employees who work hard to ensure that millionaires and billionaires don't cheat on their taxes is not government waste. It is what government is for.

In the coming days, my office will be taking action. We will share resources for Federal employees so that they know their rights. We will host a tele-townhall to hear directly from affected workers. We will demand transparency from the agencies responsible for these layoffs.

I also urge the Government of Puerto Rico to step up to provide these workers the assistance that the government of Puerto Rico usually provides to workers who are laid off in the tourism or manufacturing sectors.

To the workers affected, I send a clear message: I know that being laid off is painful. It hurts your finances. It hurts your stability. It can even hurt your sense of self-worth, but let's be clear: You are not the problem. Your government is the problem. I see you, hear you, and will fight for you.

HONORING GEORGE WALTON WELLER

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

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor an extraordinary American, a true hero in every sense, George Walton Weller.

For 65 years, Mr. Weller has dedicated his life to the safety and well-being of his community through the Verona Volunteer Fire Company. Helping to found the fire company in 1959, he remains an active member to this day at age 91. His unwavering commitment to service and deep sense of duty are nothing short of inspiring.

Long before he answered the call as a firefighter, Mr. Weller bravely served our Nation as a member of the United States Air Force. Serving for 4 years during the Vietnam war, he defended the freedoms we hold dear.

Mr. Weller has strengthened his community in the generations of firefighters he has mentored and his example of dedication. Few can claim such a