

Oakland resident Violet Henderson, who shared her personal story of overcoming poverty. After leaving, unfortunately, the criminal justice system, after being paroled, she told her story. She is a phenomenal individual who is raising her two children and is a student. She succeeded against overwhelming odds. Her story is a powerful example of resilience and dedication, which so many struggling Americans have.

It should be a call to action for Members of Congress to help more people like Violet by supporting policies that will end poverty. Yet our Republican colleagues continue to promote harmful cuts to critical safety net programs despite knowing that these cuts will push more families over the edge; and the record of the members on Speaker RYAN's so-called Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity, and Upward Mobility are just as bad, if not worse. Time and time again, they have voted to cut SNAP, to erode higher education funding and Pell Grants, and to weaken affordable housing programs.

Mr. Speaker, I insert in the RECORD Violet Henderson's testimony.

TESTIMONY OF VIOLET HENDERSON AT HOUSE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE HEARING: "THE FAILURE OF TRICKLE DOWN ECONOMICS IN THE WAR ON POVERTY," APRIL 14, 2016

Thank you Leader Pelosi, Congresswoman DeLauro, Congresswoman Edwards, and Whip Hoyer. Thank you to the other panelists up here with me. And I want to give a special thank-you to my Congresswoman, Congresswoman Barbara Lee. I'm here today because of you, Congresswoman Lee, both because you invited me to this hearing, but in a bigger sense, your leadership in Oakland and support of good reentry and economic policies has made it possible for me to escape poverty and live a life I am proud of and talk to you about today.

I am honored to be here, and grateful that you have given me the opportunity to speak about these issues. I am a worker, a mother, a grandmother, a formerly incarcerated person, a churchgoer, and a student.

I can speak only for myself but I hope that my testimony today can give voice to the millions of people who, like me, got caught up in the criminal justice system, worked incredibly hard to transform their lives, but still face lifelong stumbling blocks to financial stability. Unlike me, too many people who worked have never escaped poverty despite their hard work.

For me, like so many, the challenges started with childhood poverty. My father died when I was four years old. My mother had seven children to care for on her own and she really struggled. I grew up in the Aliso Village housing project in East Los Angeles. I never remember, as a child, having hope or vision about a bright future.

My "escape" came when I was fourteen years old. My 21-year-old boyfriend took me to Oakland and made me work the streets. At the time, I did not have the privilege of believing that I deserved more and better for my life. I was first arrested for when I was sixteen years old but I was not seen as the victim of sex trafficking. I was treated like a criminal. And I became one. My next boyfriend, who was 25 years older than I was, taught me how to become a thief. When I was 19 years old I was sent to prison for grand theft and conspiracy of several hundred dollars in a street scam.

Because I was a high school dropout, I got my G.E.D. while I was in prison, and afterward I took college-level classes. For the first time in my life I was exposed to learning, and I loved it. While in prison I met a mother and a daughter who were incarcerated at the same time. This broke my heart because the daughter had a child whom she missed dearly and tried to escape from prison to get back to her child. The moment I heard that the daughter tried to escape, I made a decision to change my life. I wanted children but I was going to put them through that. I have never looked back.

Once I got out, I had two wonderful children and dedicated myself to supporting them. I worked full-time as a cosmetologist but still did not earn enough to feed my family. For a while we survived because we had access to food stamps, which we needed even when I was working multiple full-time jobs. Then, thanks to an affirmative action program, I was able to join the local Laborers Union and I worked heavy construction for the next 20 years. It was hard physical labor but I was grateful for the opportunity because I earned more money than I had ever earned at any other job. It allowed me, as a single parent, to provide for my children, though we still struggled.

Working as a laborer became more and more difficult as I grew older and I looked for other work. When I was 54 years old I was denied office jobs because of my convictions, which were then 30 years old. Thanks to free reentry clean slate legal services—which Congresswoman Barbara Lee helped start in Oakland at the East Bay Community Law Center—I was able to clean up my record, and as a result I was able to get a great job, and thankfully one that this sixty-one-year-old body can handle. I'm coordinating the environmental/waste reduction program for a large city agency. It has been an inspiring and wonderful opportunity. I was even able to fulfill my life-long dream of becoming a homeowner and I bought a condo in Oakland.

A few years back I enrolled in a community college in Oakland to study Environmental Management, where I take night and evening classes. I have surprised myself by earning a 3.92 GPA, and was even more surprised when I was recently invited to transfer to the University of California at Berkeley.

But—and this why we are here today—despite my successes, and despite working as hard as a person can work, I have worried constantly about keeping my head above water financially. I have had stable employment, and I have catapulted myself out of the deep poverty my family knew when I was a child. BUT still, even now, I can't say that I have feel economically secure. I struggled mightily to hold onto my condo through the economic recession. I am 61 years old and worried about being able to retire anytime soon.

I don't exactly know how to define "middle class" but it can't mean what I have done for the last 3 decades of my life: Working full time, being very frugal, but yet also constantly worrying about meeting my basic financial obligations and the threat of eviction. And I am someone who has been exceptionally lucky in terms of the abundance of learning and employment opportunities I have had! I cannot imagine the financial burdens of people who have been less fortunate or live in areas with fewer programs.

My plea today is that you work for policies that reward all hard working people in America with a fair chance to support their families. This is the challenge my children face even though both of them are resourceful, intelligent, and have good jobs. I pray that my children will be able to know economic prosperity, which at very least means

living without constant worry about day-to-day about making it.

I sit before you as a very different person from who I was as lost and hopeless 16-year-old girl on the streets. It has been a long journey of seeking forgiveness for the harm I caused others, and healing myself I hope my story can inspire women who are now struggling on the path I was on thirty years ago. I want them to be encouraged to persevere and make positive changes in their lives, and to have faith in the system. But the system must also have faith in us! Successful reentry requires government policies and programs that remove stumbling blocks to economic security.

I am exceptionally grateful to be here but I am not exceptional. I am an example of what's possible when we support people through smart and fair reentry and economic programs.

Thank you.

THE BUDGET AND THE ZIKA VIRUS

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this morning, I had the privilege of participating with the Union Theological Center, in New York, to speak about our faith and our legislation. It causes me to come to the floor today to act upon that very strong faith in the Good Samaritan, which means that we are, in effect, our brothers' and sisters' keeper.

We have a devastating disease in the Zika virus that has now been announced as being more devastating than had been expected as it causes severe brain damage; and my State and Gulf States and other States across America are, in fact, in the target line. In Texas, for example, we recently had a Zika virus hearing, and our infectious disease experts told us that this is a devastating disease.

Yes, we can take money from someplace else and borrow from Peter to pay Paul, but I am asking this Congress, in the spirit of the Good Samaritan, to pass the President's emergency supplemental request of \$1.9 billion. I will be asking the Secretary of Health and Human Services to come to Texas and sit down with our law enforcement and health professionals in order to make a difference.

Finally, let me say, Mr. Speaker, that this is budget day, and we have not passed a budget. We will not pass a Republican budget because it kills education; it doesn't protect Social Security; and it is not in the spirit of a Good Samaritan. Let us do what is right—pass a budget for the American people and provide for those in the line of danger with the Zika virus.

MISSED BUDGET DEADLINE

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

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, there is something important for the American people to know: today is the day, April

15, that the law requires that Congress enact a budget resolution. Obviously, that ain't gonna happen. However, the Republican-led Budget Committee did share a budget blueprint with the GOP leadership. Ultimately, the leadership decided that it wasn't harsh enough on families, seniors, or children to pass through a Republican majority.

A Federal budget should be a reflection of our values as a Nation, and the details of the rumored proposal of a road to ruin that the Republicans want to release are just not good. Apparently, the attempt to end the Medicare guarantee for seniors, to repeal the Affordable Care Act, and to block investments in good-paying jobs was not sufficiently brutal enough for the radicals within the Republican Party. If this version of the budget could not muster enough support to be brought to the House floor for a vote, I fear what the Republican majority will actually propose.

House Democrats should continue to press for a budget that creates jobs, grows paychecks, and invests in the future of the American people, like we always do. We believe in those values, and that is what we will continue to fight for.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1670. An act to direct the Architect of the Capitol to place in the United States Capitol a chair honoring American Prisoners of War/Missing in Action.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1436. An act to require the Secretary of the Interior to take land into trust for certain Indian tribes, and for other purposes.

“A REPUBLIC, MADAM, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT”

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, being argued before the United States Supreme Court—the eight Justices remaining—is a case of *United States v. Texas*. It will take up the President's—I started to say his “executive order,” but, actually, in the case of His Majesty's program on amnesty, there actually was no executive order that was signed by the President. Like you find in a lot of countries around the world where there is a dictator, there was a speech made and comments made by the ruler. Then the Secretary of Homeland Security—in our case, Secretary Johnson—wrote a series of memos to carry out the dicta-

tion from on high, and they overrode the laws that were duly passed by both Houses of Congress and by previous Presidents.

That is where we run into some trouble. That is where you run into trouble in doing what Benjamin Franklin suggested might be possible to undo. As we know, a lady asked him at the Constitutional Convention, “What did you give us?” and he said, “A Republic, Madam, if you can keep it.” One of the ways you do not keep representative government—self-government through the electing of Representatives to do the will of the people—is to go and have those elections and elect people who pass laws—I mean, the Founders wanted government to have gridlock.

As I mentioned before, Justice Scalia, in talking to a group of 50 or so senior citizens from my district, explained that the reason we are the freest country in history—or at least we used to be. The indicators indicate we are not the freest country anymore, but the reason we became, for a while there, the freest country in history was that the Founders did not trust government. They knew that, if it were too easy for a government to make laws or to just dictate what would happen in a country, then people would not be free.

They pledged their lives, liberty, sacred honor—they pledged everything. Many—most, actually—of the signers of the Declaration of Independence did not have very pleasant lives after the signing of that. Many lost their treasures, their fortunes. They never lost their sacred honor. They pledged it, and they never lost their sacred honor.

When you look at all of the sacrifices that were made to try to allow us to have representative, self-government—and as difficult as it is to pass a bill here in the House and have the Senate pass the same bill or a similar bill and, if they are not the same, to go to conference and try to work out a bill that is the same and get it passed in both Houses and send it to the President and get the President to sign it and have the Supreme Court say, yes, that it is consistent with the Constitution—that is very difficult.

All of those things have happened with regard to our immigration law that the President talked about, as any good ruler would; and, of course, as any good ruler, he had a Secretary of Homeland Security who did memos and said: Okay. We are going to just not pay any attention to that law. Here is the new law.

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I was amazed to hear all of the major networks, including Fox News, talk about “Here is the new program,” “Here is the new plan” after memos were concocted that overrode the laws that were duly passed in the House and Senate and signed previously by the President, who just overrode the law and said: We are not going to do that. We have, in their opinion, the discretion to just ignore the law and do what we want.

There is a good article out of the Hoover Institution journal written by Michael McConnell. It just came out on April 15. I thought it did a good job of discussing these issues that are coming up before the Supreme Court on Monday.

Also, by way of further preface, the decision originated in the Southern District of Texas before United States District Judge Andrew Hanen, who happened to be one of the smartest people in his class and, actually, going through law school, one of the more liberal people in our class in law school, but a brilliant guy.

The more he delved into issues, the better lawyer he became. He was with one of the best firms in Houston. He has become a profoundly good arbitrator of justice as a United States judge.

So Judge Hanen wrote a very lengthy order in which he enjoined in carrying out the wishes that were dictated by the Secretary of Homeland Security because they violate the law. They say: We are ignoring the law. And the judge could see that there are massive consequences.

Although right here in this very room the President said that we are not going to cover people that are illegally in the country with his ObamaCare, it turns out that that wasn't true.

We have, apparently, massive numbers who get the income tax credit, whether legally or not. I have people constantly telling me they work for different income tax services and they provide services to people that don't have Social Security numbers that are legitimate.

They all know about the earned income tax credit, and they all want it on there. They all claim it. Whether they can tell you where their kids are or not, they want that credit.

There has been some massive projections of just how much in millions or billions is being paid out. We previously had reporting about, just in one little community, how numerous people claim to live in one home and claim to have as many as 30 kids or so in that home so they could claim all those earned income tax credits so they could get a big refund.

There is massive amounts of money that is being taken from those who earned it and given to those who have come into the country illegally.

I don't have the articles in front of me. There are articles out this week talking about that, actually, by more than the current unemployment rate—even the real rate, not the one that is just made up—it doesn't include the 94 million or so who are eligible to work, have tried to find work and given up trying to find work.

But either number you care to use, we have that percentage of people who have immigrated to America. Thank God for legal immigration.

Perhaps one in six people working in America are first-generation immigrants. That is great, but the trouble is