From an early age, Matt's love of baseball was apparent. He would spend hours and hours practicing and throwing a ball against a wall; and once on the field, his eyes and smile reflected his unbridled enthusiasm and deep-rooted passion for the game. On the field, he was in complete control and nothing else mattered. Simply to be there in uniform along with his teammates was a great feeling for him.

Then, in seventh grade, he developed a tumor on his spine. After three extensive surgeries, Mr. Speaker, he was told he could not play the game anymore. For most kids, that heart-wrenching gut punch would be a pivotal moment in their life, one in which they would give up in defeat. But not Matt Gruda. Faced with a challenge and the unknown, he decided to seize on the opportunity, becoming the youngest assistant coach and umpire in the history of the league. He confronted his adversity, not viewing it as a stumbling block, but as a stepping stone to success. He has continued to build stepping stones to success with every challenge he has faced.

In speaking with the people who know Matt best, they described him as someone who does not hold a grudge; someone who is always looking on the bright side of things; someone who is kind, considerate, and is always eager to make you smile; someone who is a good friend, a caring brother, and a wonderful son; and someone whom you would always want on your team.

I know that I am grateful to have had Matt on our team for the past 2 years. He will always have an honorary spot on our bench. As a mentor, Mr. Speaker, I stand here today very proud of what Matt has accomplished and so excited for him to take this next chapter by storm. He is a bright, talented, and determined young man, and I look forward to seeing all that he will accomplish in life.

On behalf of our entire team and our entire community, we thank Matt.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COSTA). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for 5 minutes.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, during times of crisis and upheaval, societies have a unique opportunity to reimagine themselves, to fix wrongs, and to make themselves better than they were previously. The pandemic of 1917 created the Roaring Twenties. The aftermath of the Civil War brought railroads, canals, and bridges to connect us. The Great Depression gave us the New Deal.

After the devastation of the COVID pandemic and the truth reveal of our systemic problems of racism, economic inequality, wealth and healthcare disparities, we must use this time and this opportunity to not only forge forward, but to correct wrongs. While the American Rescue Plan is changing the course of the pandemic and delivering relief for working families, this is not the time to build back the way things were. This is a moment to reimagine and rebuild a new economy.

The American jobs plan is an investment in America that will create millions of good jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position this United States to outcompete China and other nations. The American jobs plan will invest in America in a way that we have not invested since we built the interstate highways and won the space race.

The United States of America is the wealthiest country in the world, yet we rank 13th when it comes to overall quality of our infrastructure. Public domestic investment as a share of the economy has fallen more than 40 percent since the 1960s. After decades of disinvestment, our roads, bridges, and water systems are crumbling. Our electric grid is vulnerable to catastrophic outages. Too many lack access to affordable high-speed internet and to quality housing.

The past year has led to job losses and threatened economic security, eroding more than 30 years of progress in women's labor force participation. It has unmasked the fragility of our caregivers' infrastructure. It has never been more important for us to invest in strengthening our infrastructure and our competitiveness, and in creating good paying union jobs of the future.

This must include a 21st century infrastructure—deployment of broadband and closing the digital divide in this country—creating the modern bridge that will unite and create more economic and opportunity equity in our country.

Unlike past major investments, President Biden's plan also prioritizes addressing longstanding and persistent racial injustice. The plan targets 40 percent of the benefit of climate and clean infrastructure investments to disadvantaged communities. The investment of $100 billion in broadband internet will be the component that will make America a leader, an innovator, once again.

Broadband internet is the new electricity. It is necessary for Americans to do their jobs; to create jobs; to participate equally in school learning, healthcare, and to stay connected. It is estimated, however, that 10 percent—over 30 million Americans—live in areas where there is inadequate or no broadband infrastructure. Americans living in rural areas, on Tribal lands, and in the territories particularly lack adequate access. Even in our urban areas, many have stark differences in access to internet and to jobs.

President Biden's American jobs plan is visionary and exactly what people across this country have been asking from our Nation's leaders for years, even decades. Representing the Virgin Islands, I am especially excited about his focus on building infrastructure that is resilient to our changing climate, electrifying our highway system, investing heavily in transit and other cleaner mobility options, and working to eliminate the digital divide.

In announcing his plan, the President has taken our voices—the voices in Congress—and has put those words into action. The American jobs plan will not only make bold transformational investment in our Nation's transportation infrastructure, it will do so with an emphasis on creating good paying jobs, supporting American manufacturing, and investing in rural and urban communities alike.

Earlier this year, the New Democrat Coalition unveiled our agenda for the first 100 days of the 117th Congress. The New Dems share the Biden-Harris administration's vision to build back better, and we will work together to move our country forward.

We must rebuild our communities and our economy better than before with the American jobs plan. Now is the time to think boldly with a once-in-a-century investment to create millions of good–paying jobs.

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF RC–135S CRASH IN ALASKA 2020

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

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the anniversary of the tragic loss of a 55th Wing RC–135 Cobra Ball aircraft on the remote island of Shemya, Alaska.

Forty years ago last month, Cobra Ball tail number 2664 crashed on approach to Shemya Air Force Base, a rugged outpost on the far western tip of the Aleutian Islands. Six brave American airmen perished in the fiery crash that day, an eternal reminder of the cost of the Cold War and the price of vigilance we too often take for granted.

The RC–135 reconnaissance aircraft—designated Cobra Ball—is designed to rapidly collect telemetry and special intelligence on ballistic missiles in flight. Throughout the Cold War and to the present day, reconnaissance crews from the 55th Wing are dispatched on short notice around the world to fly the RC–135 to gather technical intelligence on weapons tests that cannot be obtained by any other method. This information is used to verify treaty compliance and to support the continuous development of America's strategic and theater missile defense capabilities.

Throughout the Cold War, the Strategic Air Command kept the Cobra Ball on a continuous 24-hour alert status on Shemya Island in the northern Pacific, affectionately known as The Rock. Their job was to launch at a moment's notice to keep a watchful eye on Soviet ballistic missile tests conducted from the Kamchatka Peninsula.

On March 15, 1981, the 24 crewmembers on board the RC–135 tail number 61–2664 were en route to Shemya