special interests. We do it by letting the free market flourish through lower taxes, lower regulation, and more economic freedom.

This model worked under President Trump, who delivered record lows in unemployment for Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and women, and it will work again, if only the Biden administration will put the American people first and not special interests.

ELECTION CONTEST DISMISSED

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

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Madam Speaker, last week, we passed a resolution dismissing the last House election contest of the 2020 cycle, in the 14th District of Illinois.

Before this resolution came to the floor, the Committee on House Administration approved it with unanimous bipartisan support.

I am incredibly honored that my community chose me to represent them in Congress again, and I look forward to a productive term.

But I am not here to take a victory lap. This is an important moment, not because of which candidate won, but because the constitutional rights of my constituents were upheld, despite my opponent's efforts to disenfranchise the very people he sought to represent.

Much like the previous President, my opponent ignored voters' voices by declaring himself the winner days before the results were in. Once the votes had been tallied, he again joined the former President in making baseless allegations of fraud and conspiracy.

After a careful consideration of the merits of his case, the committee found that my opponent's many arguments about supposed irregularities failed to add up to a credible claim to the result he wanted.

Exhibiting the utmost disrespect for his own would-be constituents, he even went so far as to attempt to invalidate thousands of ballots, under a technicality that the Illinois Supreme Court had already deemed invalid under both the State and Federal Constitutions.

Specifically, the court warned that the standard my opponent sought to apply in this case would allow corrupt officials to deliberately toss out ballots of voters whom they had reason to believe voted otherwise than they desired, which is exactly what he attempted to do.

By passing the resolution dismissing this baseless contest, the House upheld the results that were verified by seven county clerks, including four Republicans, and certified by the State of Illinois.

On behalf of my constituents whose voices were heard despite these efforts to silence them, I want to thank the many election officials and volunteers who safely and successfully administered the highest-turnout election in history, during a pandemic.

I also want to thank the House Administration Committee and its hardworking staff for faithfully carrying out the Federal Contested Elections Act by rejecting this attempt at disenfranchisement.

Unfortunately, the contest in my district was just one battle in a war that is still ongoing, a war on democracy, on voting rights, and on truth itself.

It will take more than a resolution to defeat the big lie: a seditious effort to delegitimize the 2020 election and every future election.

As the so-called debate about widespread fraud that did not occur raged on, I have been shocked and horrified by the willingness of so many people to tell dangerous, flat-out lies, people who should know better, including, terrifyingly, elected officials at every level of government.

I desperately hope for a future where the fabric of reality itself is no longer under attack, because there can be no compromise here. There is nothing to compromise on. The choice is simple: truth or lies.

In the meantime, Madam Speaker, let me tell you about the reality that others have left far behind. The reality is that the American people chose Democrats to lead the House, the Senate, and the White House. In reality, Americans voted for healthcare, for childcare, and for a safe climate and environment.

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In reality, Americans chose historic numbers of women, people of color, and LGBTQ people to represent them in this Chamber.

There are people who refuse to face this reality, like my erstwhile opponent, the former President, and far too many others in positions of great responsibility. Their denial of the truth is incompatible with the democracy we all swore an oath to defend.

A few months ago, we endured a violent insurrection here in this building, an all-too-real manifestation of this widespread assault on reality. We survived the attack, but we are still in the midst of an insidious erosion of norms and policies that threatens our democracy, including by sowing distrust of our elections and our democratic institutions.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in rejecting these attacks on our democracy by living as though the truth were true.

FEDERAL UNEMPLOYMENT BONUS

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

Mr. FITZGERALD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk briefly on a topic that has come up numerous times already this morning. I just attended a meeting of the Small Business Committee in which we had an extensive discussion as well.

If you remember back when the CARES package was moving through Congress, there were a number of legislators who identified that an issue was being created that didn't need to necessarily be created, and that was additional dollars being set aside for those who would find themselves unemployed.

As a former State legislator in Wisconsin, I had kind of gone through a process back in 2008 and 2009, which basically was an unemployment insurance fund—and I would underscore the idea insurance—that was in the red. It was as a result of the number of unemployment claims that were being made in my State.

There was a nonpartisan commission that had been created to kind of oversee this process, without getting too far into the details. It had worked, where there had been some give and take. Employers and those who represented employers knew that there would be X amount of dollars taken out of everyone's payroll that would supplement or pay for the premiums associated with unemployment, and the system worked. But when the uptick came as a result of the economy sputtering at the time, it went into the red.

It is just a reminder, I think, of what we find ourselves kind of in the midst of right now. As I said, some earlier speakers referenced this. We have this $300-a-week bonus that so many people are calling it right now. And I get it; I am not trying to be too judgmental on people who actually find themselves in that position.

But what we are hearing from employers is that, as a result of the new dollars being in that unemployment system, it is doing two things. The first thing it is doing is obviously putting the regular private-sector market that employers are typically used to, and it is forcing them to kind of either increase wages to the point where it doesn't work for them. It just won't work for their small business model. They can't afford it and still be able to put out goods and services.

The other thing it does, though, is it keeps people on unemployment. So what we are experiencing in our State—and I think I am hearing that other States are experiencing the same thing, and I think we are up to 19 different States right now—Governors have made a decision to pull back on the $300 a week. It is certainly cratering these unemployment insurance pots again. They can't keep up with it.

So I am here today to just tell the constituents of Wisconsin and, really, nationwide, as we see State by State and the economy kind of moves in one direction, that there has to be a change. It is not even a partisan issue. Something has to give here in the short term, and I would certainly hope that President Biden would take a deeper look at this. I think the House and the Senate should actually move in

a direction where there would be some type of reduction in these benefits very soon.

I am very worried about this whole idea that there are a number of individuals out there right now who, I think, find themselves in a position where, you know, they are going to wait. They are just going to wait. They are going to wait for September to come, they are going to wait for October to come before they really start to reengage.

The other thing in Wisconsin and other States that exists, when you are on unemployment insurance, you had to go out and look for a job. You know, you had to talk to employers and you had to develop your soft skills, which means, you know, making sure you are ready for work and you get to work on time. I am a little concerned that the pandemic has had a direct effect on that as well.

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to be here this morning to highlight these issues again. I would like to work with the other side of the aisle and I would like to work with the President to make sure that we can find a way of reversing what I think is a path that is really going to jeopardize our entire nationwide economy.

PREVENTING FUTURE PANDEMICS

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss what we must do to prevent the next pandemic and why it is not only a global health issue, but also an environmental one.

The origins of the pandemic we are battling now are clear: unsanitary, unsafe wildlife markets.

These markets, which are prevalent in some areas of Asia and Africa, but are present everywhere, including in the United States, are fed by trade in wildlife; some of it legal; some of it illegal; all of it very dangerous.

They are breeding grounds for a strain of viruses known as zoonotics, which are diseases born from the unnatural intermingling of the bodily fluids of different species in an unsafe and unsanitary market that sold wildlife, living and dead, for human consumption.

Other zoonotics include SARS, MERS, Zika, Ebola, swine flu, bird flu, HIV/AIDS, and now COVID. COVID–19 has truly opened the world's eyes to the danger of these markets and the global impact, and it should open our eyes to just how urgent the need for legislation around this is in order to prevent the loss of millions of lives.

That is why over the course of the last year I wrote the Preventing Future Pandemics Act along with my friend, Mr. FRED UPTON, and Senators CORY BOOKER and JOHN CORNYN in the Senate. We may not agree on much, but we agree on this: We have the power to prevent the next pandemic, and to do nothing would be an act of negligence.

A vital lesson that we need to learn from COVID is that we must fundamentally change the way that we interact with wildlife globally if we want to stop this from happening again. This means stopping deforestation and other habitat destruction, slowing and ending global climate change, and global shutdown of live wildlife markets.

Already we have seen how changes in temperature and weather patterns and encroaching human development have brought people and wildlife into more frequent and more intimate contact. Human consumption of wildlife is simply the most dangerous form of that contact.

To get at the root of this problem, the Preventing Future Pandemics Act would establish the official foreign policy of the U.S. to be that we would work with other countries to shut down these markets, end the trade in terrestrial wildlife for human consumption, and build international coalitions to reduce the demand for wildlife as food.

The bill would authorize funding for USAID to work on reducing demand for consumption of wildlife from wildlife markets, and support shifts to alternate sources of food and protein in communities that rely upon this consumption for food security.

Moreover, to truly lead by example, this bill would end the import and export of wildlife for human consumption in and out of the United States.

While wildlife is not a major source of protein in our country, these markets do exist here, and they still pose a danger. If we are to establish and maintain a position of international leadership on this issue, we must practice what we preach.

This bill will help us take significant steps to break down the silos between global health and conservation, because we know unequivocally that if we try to treat these as separate problems, we fail to solve either problem.

After the economic and social devastation of the past year, and the way that COVID–19 has upended all of our lives, it is my view that the Preventing Future Pandemics Act is a national security bill, a conservation bill, an animal wildlife bill, a small business bill, a travel industry bill, a manufacturing bill, a retail bill, a mental health bill, a housing bill, and a public transit bill. It is a bill to protect our lives and livelihoods from the threat of human consumption of wildlife and the associated wildlife trade.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to rally around this in order to potentially save the world from suffering the consequences of inaction and standing by hopelessly as we watch another pandemic ravage our world.

The next pandemic can be stopped, and the Preventing Future Pandemics Act is a vital first step. Let's do it together.

AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL

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

Mr. BACON. Madam Speaker, I agree with the comments of many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle expressing grave concern over the President's decision to establish a date certain for the withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from Afghanistan. I believe this decision is deeply misguided, and it is damaging to the long-term national security interests of the United States and our allies.

The strawman argument of ending forever wars might be a convenient campaign slogan, but it is strategically naive and deeply offensive to those who have volunteered to fight to ensure that the very organization which attacked us on September 11, 2001, is incapable of ever doing it again.

This is their job. It is a job that I did on four deployments. It is our sworn duty. It is their sworn duty. They are proud to do it, and we honor them for it.

The truth is our force levels in Afghanistan are a fraction of what they once were, and have been steadily decreasing for years. Maintaining a small residual force is not an unaffordable or unsustainable burden. More than any other deployment in the world, the U.S. and NATO presence in Afghanistan delivers tangible strategic benefits to the U.S. at a relatively small and ever-decreasing cost, not to mention the immense humanitarian benefit to the people of Afghanistan itself, especially the women and the girls.

The recent violence committed by the armed forces in Afghanistan only proves that the Taliban, al-Qaida, and ISIS-K clearly see this announcement as a full-fledged capitulation, and it reveals their true nature as untrustworthy and savage.

A military withdrawal must always be based on conditions, not a calendar. By establishing a specific date, we are simply surrendering the hard-fought leverage we have gained over two decades, and we are inviting the Taliban to embark on a vicious reign of terror against the Afghanistan people.

Furthermore, as a military man, I am utterly dismayed that we did not take the necessary steps to secure and prepare standoff basing in the region to project power when needed to conduct counterterrorism operations and to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces before announcing the withdrawal.

We put the cart before the horse. We now have a moral obligation to ensure that the Afghan security forces can continue functioning with the proper military and financial support to keep the Taliban from once again plunging Afghanistan into darkness.

Finally, and most urgently, we must honor our promises and keep faith with our partners and allies. Our values must remain the foundation of our foreign policy. If our partners and allies