Last month, the Senate passed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act with the support of 19 Republican Senators, including Minority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL. Since then, I have heard the loudest voices in the room say a lot about this bill, except for calling it what it is, a once-in-a-generation investment in our Nation's physical infrastructure.

For myself and so many others, a bill like this is the reason we came to Congress.

We have heard from the mom or dad who hit a pothole and had to pay out of pocket to fix the family car.

We have seen our children struggle and fall behind in school without reliable internet access.

Our communities are the ones where basic access to clean drinking water has been jeopardized by aging pipes.

Our workers and businesses are the ones calling for investments that will help them compete on the world stage.

So, the question is: What will we, as Members of Congress, do about it?

Will we allow blatant partisanship on both sides of the aisle to stand in the way of legislation that is objectively good for the American people?

Will we ignore the very real crisis that is facing infrastructure systems in communities like the one I represent in central New York?

Will we simply disregard the pleas from the most significant labor and business advocates in the country?

I, for one, will not. I strongly support the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and I urge the Speaker to bring the bill to the floor as a standalone vote today.

This long-overdue legislation delivers comprehensive investment in our roads and bridges, ports and waterways, clean water systems, broadband networks, electrical grids, and airports.

The bill takes essential steps to streamline Federal permitting processes and undertakes the crucial work of improving the resiliency of our hard infrastructure.

Critically, this legislation includes responsible pay-fors in addition to its $550 billion in new spending for physical infrastructure. The CBO estimates that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will have a 33 percent return on investment because of the economic benefits of long-term infrastructure projects. Experts from the American Enterprise Institute have argued that spending under this legislation would not contribute to inflation because the spending would be spread out over a decade and focus on improving long-term productivity.

To be sure, no legislation is perfect, but this measure is the product of an honest, good faith, and bipartisan effort to reach consensus and deliver for our constituents. I know that because I have spent many years working with my colleagues in the Problem Solvers Caucus to reach this moment.

Since 2017, our group has worked on a framework that would move the ball forward on infrastructure and present real policy solutions for the challenges we face.

In presenting our work to a bipartisan group of Governors, Senators, and Members of the House in Annapolis, Maryland, earlier this year, we helped lay the framework for the bipartisan infrastructure bill the House is now considering.

I am grateful to all of my colleagues who worked on this, and I sincerely hope that this work will not have been done in vain. I hope that we can see through the cloud of misinformation and partisan efforts to hold this bill hostage. I hope my colleagues will look at this bill objectively, on its own merits, and consider the benefits that it holds for the communities they represent.

I would also remind my colleagues who are unsure of where they will fall this one simple thing: The world is watching.

Our Nation's adversaries, like the Chinese Communist Party, would like nothing more than to see this body yield to partisan interests and refuse to invest in its own people. These adversaries would cheer our decision to ignore the crises of the past year and decide not to invest in cybersecurity for our infrastructure assets. They would be relieved if we continue a status quo that erases our economy's competitive edge and allows malign actors to gain the upper hand.

Simply put, with this bill, Congress is taking a critical step in deciding who will build the future. I will back a future built by American workers, ensuring opportunities for American families and American businesses.

I sincerely hope my colleagues will put down their swords just this once—just this once—and join me.

COVID INFECTION AND VACCINATION RATES

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, this morning, I wanted to share with the Chamber the latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services regarding infection rates and vaccination rates in the country.

I am proud to say, the State of Connecticut, which the Speaker knows well, we ranked as the lowest infection rate in the country, 1.4 percent, 14 cases per 100,000.

Simultaneous with that report were the numbers regarding vaccination rates. For the population 18 and over, we are at an 80 percent vaccination rate, which, again, is the highest in the country.

It is blindingly obvious there is a causal connection between communities that come together to boost vaccination rates and the benefit and the result of reducing infection rates. The benefit, in terms of our hospital system in the State of Connecticut, again, we have 9 per 100,000 COVID patients, which ranks number three in the country, right behind Vermont and the State of Massachusetts, which are 7 per 100,000 and 8 per 100,000.

What does that mean? It means there is no pressure on your ICU units. There is allowance for normal elective surgeries and the processes of hospitals to continue, which is the endgame of what we all should be focused on like a laser, which is to get beyond this pandemic.

It didn't happen by itself.

Anecdotally, in my district, I was over at the Coast Guard Academy the other day: a 99 percent vaccination rate with the student body at the Coast Guard Academy. These are the future leaders of our coastal sea service, and they get it. They understand the benefits, that they can attend class and have a normal campus life.

Across the river, the submarine base in Groton, again, just shy of a 90 percent vaccination rate. That is 10,000 sailors and officers. These are people with families. These are folks who have pregnant spouses. But they get it. I mean, there is no way you can socially distance in a submarine. They are now the number one naval installation in America in terms of vaccination rates.

Again, it did not happen by itself. Governor Lamont, back in the spring of 2020, basically tuned out all the noise. He brought together experts from the Yale School of Public Health. He brought together experts from the Hartford HealthCare hospital system, which is the largest hospital system. They brought together the community health centers. They brought together community groups. They stayed focused in terms of getting testing, masking, and vaccinations out there to the public at large.

I would note, Madam Speaker, that when we passed the American Rescue Plan back in March, like every State, we were given an allocation to our public health system for communication and education. Again, it has been put to good use, obviously, as these numbers show this morning.

On Tuesday, the Biden administration announced the release of funding for community health centers, which have been the backbone in terms of reaching hard-to-get populations, to get the help that they need during this pandemic. In eastern Connecticut, the two community health systems—United Children and Family Services, and Generations—are getting close to $1 million for new equipment and new infrastructure to carry out their mission to make sure that we are going to beat this virus once and for all.

All the issues that we talk about here—and they are all so important—right now, we still cannot be distracted from the need to get on the other side of this pandemic. These numbers from my State today show that when you work together, when you just combat all the misinformation and bad stuff

that is out there about vaccines and masking—we had a hearing in Hartford where we had people up there saying that the authorization from the FDA was only for the German vaccine, not the American Pfizer vaccine, which is ridiculous. That stuff is out there, but we have overcome that.

Again, the numbers speak for themselves in terms of that success.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure that we keep this priority number one, two, and three because that is how we recover our economy, and that is how we recover a normal life in this country. So, let's work together.

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CONGRATULATING THE CHARLESTON RIVERDOGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from South Carolina (Ms. MACE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MACE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Charleston RiverDogs on a defining victory in the Low-A East championship series this week. This 9–2 win is the City of Charleston's first minor league baseball title in 99 years and the first in franchise history for the Charleston RiverDogs.

The Charleston RiverDogs are a Lowcountry staple and are a vital part of our tourism and hospitality industries.

This team worked extremely hard during their record-breaking season and showed great determination while representing our beloved Charleston.

I am excited for the opportunity to go back-to-back, like Jordan in 1996 and 1997.

RECOGNIZING LAMBS FOR LIFE

Ms. MACE. Madam Speaker, I rise in recognition of Lambs for Life and its founders, Alex and Brandon Arrieta.

On April 25, 2016, Alex Arrieta, age 10, was told his cancer was gone and a bone marrow transplant was scheduled for the next month. The very next day Alex passed away.

In honor of Alex's favorite childhood toy, Lamby, his parents founded Lambs for Life. Lambs for Life delivers Lamby Packs filled with toys and a stuffed lamb for Child Life departments of children's hospitals, brightening the days of thousands of pediatric cancer patients.

Lambs for Life, led by Alex's dad, Brandon, has spent the last 5 years working with Congress and the White House to bring focus and solutions to pediatric cancer.

I commend Brandon for working through his grief at the loss of two sons to make our country better.

RECOGNIZING DEAN STEPHENS

Ms. MACE. Madam Speaker, I rise in recognition of Dean Stephens, a local news anchor, who is retiring after 31 years with ABC News 4.

Generations of Lowcountry families have welcomed Dean into their living rooms. I grew up with Dean, watching him in the Lowcountry. His first job with the station was as a weekend sportscaster, and he would eventually become a news anchor.

Dean's presence on our televisions will be greatly missed by our community. I wish him well on his much-deserved retirement.

RECOGNIZING PORTER-GAUD SCHOOL STUDENTS

Ms. MACE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the great work done by some amazing students at Porter-Gaud School in Charleston.

Last month, as part of the school's Senior Day for Caring, 100 Porter-Gaud seniors packaged over 20,000 meals for the James Island Outreach Center and One80 Place, feeding the hungry across the Charleston area. They also packaged over 350 hygiene kits to take care of our fleeing Afghan allies seeking refuge right here in the United States.

The leaders of these nonprofits tell me the tremendous work these students did saved them thousands of dollars in manufacturing costs, not to mention the good works that they are doing for our community.

REMEMBERING LUCILLE WHIPPER

Ms. MACE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of former South Carolina State Representative Lucille Whipper.

Dr. Whipper was the first African-American woman elected to the South Carolina State House from Charleston County. She served her community as an activist during the civil rights movement. She was a teacher and a guidance counselor. She was also an administrator in Charleston County public schools. Dr. Whipper was also the first African-American administrator at the College of Charleston, where she developed the school's diversity program all the way back as early as the 1970s.

Dr. Whipper will be greatly missed, but her influence will live on in our community. We thank her for her leadership, and we offer our sincerest condolences for her family during this time.

SUPPORT FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

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

Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. It would bring billions of dollars to much-needed infrastructure projects in my home State, from bridges to broadband, and it does so without raising taxes on people who make less than $400,000 a year.

As I have said before, this bill is not absolutely perfect, but it is absolutely necessary. It is a product of compromise. That is, at the end of the day, what legislating often means.

In the district I represent, this bill has received a remarkable amount of support, including everyone from labor unions to local chambers of commerce to climate groups. They are joined by national organizations like the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and hundreds of labor and trade associations.

I urge my colleagues to listen to their communities who are calling for these investments and not to give in to the Washington machine that so often turns shared bipartisan goals into political games.

This bill reminds me of the last time that we saw this level of investment in America's infrastructure, when President Eisenhower, who was from Kansas, recognized an opportunity to rebuild the economy and create jobs through infrastructure. We were then, as we are today, in a challenging time defined by a national crisis and economic difficulty.

I believe, as Eisenhower did, that infrastructure is key to building long-term economic growth. At the end of the day, infrastructure is made up of many everyday systems that connect us to one another and broaden opportunities.

If we don't invest in the health of those systems, whether it is the safety of highways like U.S. 69 in the district I get to represent, or access to high-speed internet in areas across Kansas, both urban and rural, we pay the price, and it is not just in the ways we might think.

We feel the impact of past decades of underinvestment in infrastructure, in our economy, in our educational systems, in the health of our kids, and in the health of our planet.

That is why this bill is absolutely necessary because infrastructure touches so many parts of our lives and the lives of our future generations. This bipartisan bill boosts American competitiveness, tackles climate change, and advances equity now and into the future. It is projected to create 2 million jobs per year for the next decade, with fair wage requirements written into the text.

Independent studies have shown that the investments in this bill will have multiplier effects on the economy, improving productivity and boosting economic output without increasing inflation. This infrastructure bill is large, but so is the problem.

There are immediate infrastructure needs, from roads and bridges to public transit and rail, waterways, and airports. All of these need attention. This bill will undoubtedly bring the Federal funding needed to address those issues here in the near term, and it makes significant progress toward longer-term goals, like replacing lead pipes so that every child can have access to clean drinking water or promoting Buy American provisions that create good-paying jobs for both construction and production of materials or modernizing our electric grid to prevent blackouts, like the ones we saw in Kansas and those we saw in Texas earlier this year.