



THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

Opposing H.R. 1, the Polluters Over People Act

This week, the House considered the Republicans' flagship legislation, [H.R.1](#). Cynically entitled The Lower Energy Costs Act, H.R. 1 simply doubles down on fossil fuels, removes critical regulations and environmental protections, and repeals cost-saving measures implemented through the Inflation Reduction Act passed last Congress. The bill should be called "The Polluters Over People Act," because while purporting to help Americans, H.R. 1 will primarily benefit the oil and gas industry that is already experiencing record-breaking profits. H.R. 1 will harm the American people by gutting environmental protections, curtailing public input for communities impacted by harmful energy development projects, exacerbating the climate crisis, dismantling energy cost-saving programs for consumers, jeopardizing good-paying clean energy jobs, and balloon the deficit by \$2.4 billion over the next 10 years.

I outlined my opposition to The Polluters Over People Act at a press conference with Democratic Caucus leaders and voted against the bill , because hardworking people in Virginia and across America deserve better.



Unfortunately, the Polluters over People Act passed the House on a 225 to 204 vote. I am hopeful the Senate will defeat this bad bill.



Calling for Congressional Action on Gun Violence

Since the start of 2023, there have been over 130 mass shootings in our nation. That's more than one every single day since the beginning of the year. This week, Americans watched the horror of another school shooting unfold in a Nashville elementary

school that left three children and three school employees dead. My heart breaks for these families; however, empty platitudes are meaningless. Enough is enough.

In the wake of this tragedy, congressional Republicans claimed there is nothing Congress can do, attributed gun violence solely to mental health issues, and refused to engage in meaningful conversations around comprehensive gun reform. However, as I stated in a press conference this week, we must take a holistic approach to combat gun violence. We must pass common sense reforms like banning assault weapons, strengthening red flag laws, and mandating universal background checks. We must also address the root causes of gun violence and the mental health crisis in our nation. Too many children, families and communities have been traumatized by gun violence. They demand we take action.



This week, I proudly cosponsored [H.R. 698](#), the Assault Weapons Ban of 2023, to get weapons of war off our streets. While there is no one perfect solution to the gun violence epidemic, this is a step Congress must take to curb the unnecessary loss of life.

Armed Services Committee Hearing and Science, Space, & Technology Markup

This week, the House Armed Services Committee held a hearing focused on priorities for the 2024 defense budget. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark A. Milley appeared before our committee to discuss their needs to maintain our national security strategy, military

readiness, and global interests. The hearing covered a wide variety of issues, and you can find it in its entirety [here](#). During the hearing, I questioned Defense Secretary Austin about the steps the Department of Defense is taking to enhance and expand mental health resources to our service members and veterans.



I also attended my first full committee markup on the Science, Space, and Technology Committee. A committee markup is where bills and any amendments are considered by the committee. Last week, my colleagues and I unanimously advanced seven bipartisan bills out of committee, which you can read about [here](#). The legislation we advanced will help us improve weather and climate forecasting, address the impact that synthetic opioids like Tranq is having on our communities, protect our oceans, and more. These bills will now go to the House floor for a vote.



Delta Days on the Hill

As a student at the University of Richmond, I had the honor of becoming a charter member of the Rho Rho Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. Today, I am a proud and active member of the Richmond Alumnae Chapter. I am also honored to be one of eight Deltas in Congress!

This week, over 2,500 of my sorors came to Washington for the 34th Annual Delta Days in the Nation's Capital to meet with government officials to advocate for important priorities such as strengthening our education system, expanding access to health care, assisting international development, and supporting D.C. statehood. It was wonderful to engage with so many of my Delta sisters and attend several events throughout the week.

Launch of the First-Ever Equal Rights Amendment Caucus

In 2020, I led the fight in the Virginia Senate to pass legislation making Virginia the 38th - and final - state needed to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Yet, because of an arbitrary deadline added to the ERA, it has yet to be published by the National Archivist as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This week, I co-sponsored [H.J. Res 25](#) to remove that arbitrary deadline and declare the ERA ratified.

I helped launch the first-ever congressional ERA Caucus at a press conference. I am proud to serve as one of the ERA Caucus Vice Chairs and help bring the ERA over the finish line. For too long, women have struggled to achieve equal protections under the law, and we are seeing a persistent pay inequality, attacks on their bodily autonomy, and a systematic attempt to rollback our rights and protections.



In 2023, women make \$0.77 cents to every dollar that a man makes, and it is even less for women of color. In the wake of the Dobbs decision, publication of the Equal Rights Amendment as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is needed now more than ever.

I also joined my Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) colleagues in convening a Special Order Hour on the House floor to acknowledge the incredible contributions Black

women have made to advance the ERA. I look forward to leveraging my legislative experience and leadership position within the ERA Caucus to continue this fight so that our daughters and granddaughters aren't left facing the same challenges.



Meetings this Week

Whenever I am in Washington, I have the opportunity to meet with constituents, community leaders, government officials, and organizational leaders that have an impact on our district and the Commonwealth of Virginia. This week, I met with the Virginia Port Authority, members of the Virginia Loggers, NASA Langley Director Clayton Turner, a preventive cardiologist conducting research into chronic health conditions in our district, and several other individuals and organizations. It is always a pleasure to hold these meetings and hear how I can best serve our district in Washington. I also had the privilege of seeing Virginia State University President, Dr. Makola Abdullah, while he was visiting the hill to testify before a House committee.







WHAT YOU MISSED

James Solomon Russell Commemoration

Did you know that in 2020, the Virginia General Assembly [passed a resolution](#) designating every March 28th as James Solomon Russell Day in Virginia? Who was James Solomon Russell? I'm glad you asked.

Born enslaved in Mecklenburg County, Virginia in 1857, Russell became an Episcopal priest and educator in Lawrenceville, Virginia. There he founded St. Paul Industrial and Normal School, which became St. Paul's College. His autobiography, *Adventure in Faith*, provides a fantastic view into Reconstruction era education and religious life for the Black community in Virginia.

Last weekend, a documentary about Dr. Russell premiered at Virginia State University during a celebration of James Solomon Russell Day. I also had the honor to participate in a church service honoring his life and legacy at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Petersburg.

I highly recommend a visit to the James Solomon Russell-Saint Paul's College Museum & Archives in Brunswick County to learn more about this extraordinary man.





Sincerely,

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